

DUMITRU ȚEICU

MOUNTAINOUS BANAT IN THE MIDDLE AGES



Universitary Press Cluj

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INTRODUCTION

Different approaches of the medieval history of the southern Banat have been made in the multicultural historiography of the Banat. The historical sources concerning this area, as published more than one hundred years ago by Pesty Frigyes and completed by the contemporary contributions of Costin Feneșan, are the starting point of every approach of this topic. The initiation of the medieval archaeological researches in southern Banat some three decades ago had enriched and nuanced the database concerning the medieval history of the southern Banat. The inventory of the Banat microtoponymy is in course and it can be circumscribed to the same efforts of enriching the documentary sources concerning this period.

The accumulations achieved by the medieval Banat archaeology had been the starting point of the reconstitution we have attempted regarding the historical geography of the 13th-14th centuries Banat. The medieval archaeological researches in southern Banat started rather late. During this span of about 30 years an unequal documentation had been gathered, yet containing significant data. The archaeological excavations from Gornea and Cuptoare led by Gh. Lazarovici and those from Ilidia initiated by S. Matei have emphasized defining elements of the medieval habitat: villages' hearts, 12th-15th centuries necropolises and the earliest medieval cult monuments known in Banat. The results of our researches during the last decade, in the Almăj depression on the Bârzava and Bistra valleys have integrated the entire southern Banat area into the archaeological investigation field and also brought significant new information.

The data that precisely identified the heart of several medieval villages constituted the support of the reconstitution of historical geography of Banat during the 13th-14th centuries.

The reconstitution of the medieval habitat referred to a naturally limited space within a larger geographic area (i.e. Banat). The south-eastern corner of Banat, with a dominantly mountainous relief, surrounded by a hilly chain, stands out – given its aspect - from the plain from the western and northern Banat. The Danube represents the southern boundary of the mountainous Banat, which also constitutes boundary and connecting points to the area south of the Danube. The passages of the Cerna and the Timiș separate the mountainous space of Banat towards the east and the north. Westwards, this mountainous space goes down in steps. The consequence of the evolution of the medieval habitat in the confluence area of the plain with the western hills, as well as a series of aspects

concerning the evolution of the administrative institutions, imposed the enlargement of the boundaries of the investigated area to the plain area.

The reconstitution of the habitat of the mountainous Banat, the main objective of the present study, in correlation with the historical sources that sustain it, was circumscribed into some chronological limits. The moment of the documentary attestation of the settlements within the mountainous Banat is circumscribed to the 14th-15th centuries, as a consequence of their inclusion into the sphere of the feudal relations. We have adopted information coming from documents from the end of the 15th century and even the first half of the next century that constitute the supreme limit of the investigated period. The systematic archaeological investigations into the heart of the villages bring clarifying elements concerning the foundation of the settlements in a period anterior to the moment of the written mentioning and of their evolution during the 13th-14th centuries. The medieval archaeology brought to light aspects of the medieval civilization from the 10th-12th centuries. The written sources have been used in our approach referring to the mountainous Banat in the Middle Ages.

The narrative sources from the 10th-11th centuries bring the first information about the existence of the Romanians at the western Low Danube. Few archaeological documents concerning this period do not allow more nuanced appreciation. We have considered useful a general view over the archaeological documentation concerning the 4th-10th centuries in the mountainous Banat.

The written sources bring extremely few data about the southern space of Banat during this long period. The archaeology played the role of first historical source. We have also considered that the beginnings of the Romanian Middle Ages are circumscribed to the European general phenomenon that had taken place in the same time with the falling of the Roman world at the end of the 5th century AD. The total lack of data concerning certain periods (i.e. the 5th-7th centuries AD), is due to the historical research and, consequently, completions concerning the ethno-demographic aspect of the region can not be proposed.

The attempt of reconstitution of different aspects of the medieval civilization of Banat determined the appeal to ethnological sources, to written sources from a later period and to the gains obtained by the archaeozoological research. It was followed the perpetuation of some elements related to the dwelling and material culture along the whole period of the Middle Ages.

Chancellery documents reflect, starting with the 14th century, when the villages from Banat start to be integrated into the feudal system of property imposed by the Angevin royalty, an area of Romanian settlement compact in the mountainous Banat. The manifestations of social, religious and institutional life of the Romanians from the southern Banat in

the 14th-15th centuries were followed in their evolution, as well as in their relationship with the new institutions imposed by the Hungarian Kingdom. The coagulation of a Romanian nobility at the beginning of the 14th century, from the knezes from Banat and its very active position in the areas from the Low Danube found its reflection in the chancellors' documents of that time. But, the archaeological research is at the beginning of the process of identification, and the investigation of the knezes' and Romanian nobles' residence.

The beginnings of the regional research of the Romanian Middle Ages having as a scientific support the historical, ethnological, name information as well as those offered by the medieval archaeology can be settled more than three decades ago. The medieval archaeology has started to bring very important information for the Romanian medieval history. It offered the possibility to reconstitute the image of *another Middle Age* to use a formula become famous of the French history School¹. Thus, a method, which proposes the regressive investigation of the Romanian medieval history in naturally limited regions, has been outlined. Radu Popa inaugurated and presented the new way of research of the Romanian historiography. His works dedicated to the beginnings of the Romanian Middle Ages in Maramureș and Hațeg constitute methodologically and informational, a model and a reference point to the future researches². The approach of the history of the eastern-Carpathians space during the 11th-14th centuries by Victor Spinei meant a new reference and model in the research of the Middle Age³. The recent value of the researches dedicated to the Romanian intellectuals and of the ecclesiastic structures of Hațeg by Adrian Andrei Rusu, confirms a research method inaugurated by Radu Popa about three decades ago. At the same time, he adds new dimensions to this method by connecting the problems of the Romanian Middle Ages to those of the European Medieval phenomenon⁴.

Our approach of the various and complex problems of the Medieval southern Banat joins the tradition of the Romanian historiography of which conception and methods had been verified in other areas of the Romanian inhabited space.

¹ Jaques Le Goff, *Pentru un alt ev mediu*, II, București, 1986, p. 7-15; 158 seq.

² R. Popa, *Țara Maramureșului în veacul al XIV-lea*, București, 1970, idem, *La începuturile evului mediu românesc. Țara Hațegului*, București, 1988

³ V. Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, Chișinău, 1994

⁴ A.A. Rusu, *Clitori și biserici din Țara Hațegului până la 1700*, Satu Mare, 1997.

I. SOURCES OF THE SOUTH-EASTERN BANAT HISTORY (10th – 15th CENTURIES)

The southern Banat, bridgehead of the Roman Empire on the western Lower Danube, had been abandoned at the end of the 4th century AD, because of the barbarian pressures upon the borders. For more than half a millennium, the interests of the imperial court from Constantinople had not reached so far as this territory. Temporarily, under the reign of Justinian the Great (527 – 565), the Banat Lower Danube area had been included within the frontiers of the Byzantine Empire.

The historical evolutions of the human society in Banat during this long time span took place within the frame of the Roman civilization patterns, which had also marked its birth. The written historical sources had but rarely referred to this area and even less to the social and economic structure of the society. The Banat feudal society was already crystallized at the beginning of the 10th century, when the narrative Hungarian sources took notice of it¹. The emergence of this society had followed the same patterns as those of the Transylvanian social structures. The data offered by the Hungarian or Byzantine sources for the period between the 10th and the 12th centuries are rare and incomplete. During the same period, the Banat society had not produced written inner documents. Accordingly, as the type of information sources is concerned, the remains of the material and spiritual life in this area are to be considered primary sources for the history of the medieval Banat.

The medieval archaeology is still to be considered a new offspring of the Romanian archaeology, the more so if considering the research in southeastern, mountainous area of Banat. The first archeological excavations had started only twenty-five years ago, in the medieval sites from Ilidia and Gornea. The archaeological research, even if it did not always followed a rectilinear and ascendant path, had succeed in offering a large amount of data, extremely useful for reconstitution of the Banat medieval habitat. It had also offered answers to certain important questions concerning the beginnings of the Romanian Middle Ages. Veridical archaeological information has been gathered, on the location of medieval villages and necropolises, the churches, feudal residences and fortifications in southern Banat.

¹ *Gesta Hungarorum*, chapter XLIV, IIR, 1, 1934, p. 109.

Located in an area of European confluence and subjected to various aggressions, the Romanian medieval monuments in southern Banat had faced an inimical fate. Unlike the neighboring regions, as the Hateg district for example, no medieval churches had survived in southern Banat. Our knowledge on the religious medieval architecture comes from archaeological excavations only. The remains of the cult monuments from the 13th – 15th centuries from Ildia, Reșița, Cârnecea, Mehadia, Berezovia and Caransebeș had been unearthed in the last two decades. The results of these investigations reflect the present stage of knowledge on the genesis and evolution of the religious architecture. Future investigations are expected to bring new data and to offer a more detailed image connected to this topic.

The researches from Ildia had been the starting point in the process of investigating the medieval residences from Banat. At Ildia – *Oblița* the foundations of the earliest dwelling – tower from Banat and Transylvania had been found, assigned to the 13th century, together with those of a rotunda – church. The investigations of the 14th century residence from Reșița had also brought new data concerning the problem of the Romanian medieval residences.

The investigation of certain necropolises from southern Banat dated to the 12th – 15th centuries had offered first hand historical information concerning the medieval habitat². The necropolis from Cuptoare – *Sfoge*, located in the district of Mehadia, a homogenous Romanian area, has especially to be noticed. Given the 347 investigated graves, it represents the largest and most important Romanian medieval necropolis from Banat. For the span between the 12th and 13th centuries, the investigations in the necropolises from Gornea – *Căuniță* and Șopotu Vechi – *Mârvilă*, located in Romanian populated areas, in Romanian districts mentioned in the written sources, had brought data which had completed the image offered by the necropolis from Cuptoare – *Sfoge*.

The remains of the medieval fortifications from Mehadia, Tumu Ruieni, Ildia, Bocșa, Pescari, Pojejena had been archaeologically investigated only within the last two decades³. The archaeological information, together with the written sources available in this case, are building an image of the evolution of fortified structures in southern Banat.

The archaeological excavations in the locations of the old Romanian villages from Ildia, Gornea and Moldova Veche had greatly contributed to the knowledge of the medieval habitat. Accordingly, data has been gathered on the type of dwellings characteristic of this part of Banat, on

² D. Teicu, *Banatica*, 12/1, 1993, p. 230 seqq.

³ St. Matei, *Studii de istoria artei*, Cluj-Napoca, 1982, p. 104-122.

the craftsmen' devices etc. Given the complete lack of data in the medieval written sources concerning the household and its inventory, the importance of the medieval archaeology as a source of information is not to be disputed. One has to emphasize that only a complete investigation of the village, the contemporaneous necropolis and landlord residence can offer a real, veridical image of the medieval habitat.

The archaeological research had already passed the surface collection stage, aimed at geographical micro-regions, naturally defined. Archaeological repertoires had been realized for the Oravița Depression, the Danube Valley and the Almăj Depression, the medieval habitat being a priority⁴. The white spots on the archaeological map of the Banat had been accordingly eliminated in a considerable extent.

The archaeological information on the beginnings of the Banat Middle Ages had still a reduced volume. One can use so far the results offered by the investigations of the monuments from Ilidia, Reșița, Cămecea and Berzovia and of the 12th century necropolis from Șopotu Vechi. The importance of this documentary source is evident especially for the span between the 10th and the 13th centuries, when the written sources are quasi-inexistent. Archaeology has to offer answers concerning essential aspects of the character and duration of the medieval habitation in southern Banat during this span. As for the following period – the 14th – 15th centuries – the archaeological investigations has to complete the information offered by the written documents. The researches from Ilidia, Reșița, and Berzovia are of special importance in this respect.

Certain categories of archaeological finds, such as the animal bones found in the settlements, analyzed within inter-disciplinary researches, had offered conclusive data on the medieval economy. The contribution of the archaeo – zoology to the knowledge of the Middle Ages can not be denied. The analysis of the faunal remains found in the settlements from Gornea, Ilidia and Berzovia had offered data concerning the ratio of certain domesticated species in a medieval household and the biologic characteristics of these species⁵. The anthropologic analyses for the necropolises investigated in southern Banat are still incipient and do not represent yet an important documentary source. The coins, found either by chance but mostly during the excavation of settlements and necropolises, are to be considered important markers for the chronology and economy of the Middle Ages. The medieval numismatic researches had considerably evolved during the last two decades, in close connection with the

⁴ E. Iaroslavschi, Gh. Lazarovici, *ActaMN*, XVI, 1979, p. 447-465; D. Teicu, *Banatica*, 9, 1987, p. 230-248.

⁵ G. El Susi, *SCIVA*, 40, 4, 1989, p. 371-376.

archaeological researches in southern Banat⁶.

The first attempts to realize a corpus of archaeological sources for the Banat have been made at the beginning of the 20th century. The migrations' period and the beginnings of the Middle Ages had found but a modest place in these *corpora*. Most remarkable in this respect has been the activity of Felix (Bódog) Milleker⁷. Within the archaeological repertoire made by Milleker, the finds from Moldova Veche, Orșova, Șoșdea, Deta, Denta and Vrșac had been gathered. An important moment had been the constitution of a historical society in 1872 at Timișoara, meaning also to support the archaeological researches in Banat⁸. Milleker, backed by the Society for History and Archaeology from Timișoara, had performed an intense archaeological activity. The priest Nicolae Stoica of Hațeg had also been concerned with the remains of the past from the Mehadia area. He collected artifacts discovered fortuitously in this area and described them⁹. The period between the two World Wars had meant no quantitative leap, inasmuch as the archaeological corpus of Banat was involved. This endeavour had been left aside by the Romanian universities' scientific programs. One should nonetheless mention the surface collections made by Constantin Daicoviciu and Mihail Macrea, historians from Cluj¹⁰. Following these collections, Ioachim Miloia had initiated the archaeological investigation of the medieval church in Căvăran¹¹.

The diplomatic sources, as written sources, represent the main source of information for the knowledge of medieval civilization in southern Banat.

The Byzantine diplomatic sources had rarely mentioned the Banat, except for the periods when the Empire's borders had reached the Danube. A document fundamental for the religious history of the Romanians living in Banat has been the Diploma from 1020, regarding the reorganization of the Ohrid archbishopric. Issued by the emperor Basil II, the diploma nominates among the eparchies subordinated to Ohrid the dioceses of Tibiscum and Biserica Albă (*White Church*), north of the

⁶ I. Sabău, *SCN*, 2, 1958, p. 286-292.

⁷ B. Milleker, *Délmagyarország régiségjelölői a honfoglalás előtti időkből*, Timișoara, 1909, III, 2, p. 274-287.

⁸ L. Kakucs, *Banatica*, 4, 1977, p. 473.

⁹ Nicolae Stoica de Hațeg, *Scrieri. Cronica Mehadiiei și a Băilor Herculanee*, editors: D. Mioc, C. Feneșan, Timișoara, 1984, p. 55-56.

¹⁰ C. Daicoviciu, I. Miloia, *AnB*, 1930, 4, 7, p. 10-25; M. Moga, N. Gudea, *Tibiscus*, 4, 1975, p. 126-143.

¹¹ I. Miloia, *AnB*, 1930, 4, 7, p. 26-53.

Danube¹².

The Hungarian diplomatic sources are represented by documents issued by the Chancellery of the Hungarian kingdom, by other Hungarian authorities that had functioned in Banat or in neighboring regions. There are few documents kept from the 13th century referring to the history of southern Banat. The number of the documents issued in the 14th and 15th centuries is sensibly larger and the quality of the information is higher and more diverse. Accordingly, these documents are to be considered a primary source of information. The historians are dealing with almost 800 documents issued in the 14th and 15th centuries, containing data on the southern Banat. These documents represent but a small part of the medieval Banat archives. The documentary thesaurus of Banat, kept in archives, like the religious monuments, had an inimical fate. The Turkish conquest in the 16th century also meant the destruction of some important Banat archives, while the wars in the 17th century had brought to completion the loss of the Banat archives¹³.

The documents still kept are reflecting unequally the Banat space at the Lower Danube, due to this game of the historic hazard. Accordingly, while some areas like the Bârzava Valley and the Caransebeș Depression are always to be found in the references, the Danube Valley and the Almăj Depression have been deprived by this chance.

The Hungarian diplomatic sources are very useful for the reconstitution of the historic geography of the Banat, as we intend to do it. They bring references to the names and dimensions of medieval villages, boundaries, feudal domains, social structures and economic life in this area. The Romanian districts from Banat, the privileges of the Romanians are kept in the diplomas issued by royal Hungarian chancellery.

Considering the collection and publication of the diplomatic sources, the southern Banat has a privileged position. The work of several scholars, amongst which Pesty Frigyes has to be distinguished, had materialized in a series of editions of diplomatic corpora during the second half of the 19th century. Pesty's study on the Romanian medieval districts, published in 1876, is accompanied by a series of documents¹⁴. The same scholar had published the documents referring to the Banat of Severin, an area with a homogenous Romanian population, in 1878¹⁵.

¹² H. Gelzer, *BZ*, 2, 1893, p. 43, 46; I.D. Suciu, R. Constantinescu, *Documente referitoare la istoria Mitropoliei Banatului*, 1, Timisoara, 1980, p. 21; M. Gyoni, *RHC*, 1947, V, 3, p. 42-49.

¹³ C. Feneșan, *DMB*, p. 6-7.

¹⁴ Pesty Fr., *Oláh kerületek*, p. 51-60.

¹⁵ Idem, *Szörény*. III. Budapest, 1878.

Between 1882 and 1883, two volumes of documents have been published, concerning the western extremity of the mountainous area of the Banat, where the Caraș district had been organized¹⁶. Orthmayer Tivadar had studied the confluence area with northern Banat, pertaining to the Timiș district. In 1896, he had published the documents referring to this area¹⁷. Except for the documents related to the history of Romanians published in 1941, no noticeable achievements can be assigned to the period between the two World Wars, in regard of editing medieval diplomatic sources¹⁸.

A first hand historiographical contribution in editing the Banat medieval diplomatic sources belongs to Costin Feneșan. He had gathered and published documents concerning the Banat medieval districts, Romanian families and generally the life of the Romanians during the Middle Ages in southeastern part of Banat¹⁹.

The Banat as part of the Hungarian Catholic kingdom had practically entered Rome's sphere of religious influence. **The papal diplomatic sources** refer to the internal church organization, monk orders and missions, the relations with the Banat feudal Orthodoxy²⁰.

The narrative Hungarian and Byzantine sources from the beginning of the 2nd millennium are an essential source of historical information for the history of medieval Banat. The chronicles mirror historical events that took place between the 10th and 14th centuries in the eastern Lower Danube area. Based on traditions, older sources or personal observations, these chronicles bear the mark of the author's subjectivity. They were also intending to create a certain image on an epoch or a monarch.

The Byzantine narrative sources offer data on the Banat area only for the spans when this Lower Danube area had entered the Empire's sphere of interest. The first historical source, partly focused on the geopolitical conditions of the area is Constantine VII's *De administrando imperio*. Written in the 10th century, the work mentions the Hungarian presence in the area of Severin. As for the ethnographic configuration of the zone, the Byzantine source states that the Bulgarians were separated from the Turks, i.e. the Hungarians, by the river called Danube. Towards west, there were

¹⁶ Idem, *Krassó*, III-IV, Budapest, 1882-1883.

¹⁷ Ortway T., (redactor: Pesty Fr.), *Oklevékek Tm.*, Bratislava, 1896.

¹⁸ *Doc.Val.*, Budapest, 1941.

¹⁹ C. Feneșan, *Banatica*, 5, 1979, p. 265-274; idem, *Sargeștia*, 16/17, 1982-1983, p. 267-279; idem, *StCIEC*, 1979, p. 291-299

²⁰ F. Knauz, *MEC*, 1, Strigoni, 1870, 1, p. 583; K. Juhász, *Die Stifte der Tschanader Diözese im Mittelalter*, Münster, 1927; L. Wadding, *Annales*, VIII, Quaracchi, 1931, p. 294; A. Tautu, *Acta Gregorii papae*, XI, (1370-1378), Roma, 1966.

the Franks and the Croats towards south²¹.

The Hungarian narrative sources. *Gesta Hungarorum* represents a remarkable source for the 10th century history of Banat. Magister P, notary for King Bela III, has seemingly written it. The *Anonymous' Chronicle*, as historical source, has been the subject of many contradictory appreciations until today²². The reason for these reactions towards an extremely important historical source, not only for Banat but for Hungary and Transylvania in the first place are the references made to the presence of the Romanians within this space at the moment of the Hungarian tribes' arrival. The presence of the Romanian population in the inner Carpathian range and the Pannonian Plane at the time of the Impact with the Hungarians is an irrefutable argument against the theory according to which the Romanians would have immigrate here²³. The chronicle of the *heavily condemned Anonymous*, as the historian D. Onciul called him, can be regarded as a trustworthy source for the geopolitical and ethnical realities of the 10th century Banat. The modern historical criticism appreciates that the author of the chronicle – *Magister P* – had written his work, as notary for the King Bela III, at the middle or at the beginning of the second half of the 12th century²⁴.

The Banat historical geography, at the time of Hungarians' arrival, had been described by Anonymous. According to him, the territory between the Danube and Tisa rivers was occupied by ... *Kean, the great duke of Bulgaria, ancestor of duke Salan... as for the territory between the river Mureş and the fortress of Ursclia, it was held by some duke named Glad*. Glad was the ancestor of Ahtum, from whom Stephan I will conquer the territory. Glad had left the city of Vidin and conquered the "country" with the help of the Cumans²⁵. The duke Glad, *together with a large army of riders and pedestrians, with the help of the Cumans, Bulgarians and*

²¹ D. Onciul, *Scrieri istorice*, Bucureşti, 1968, p. 191-192, 584; Constantin Porphyrogenet, *De administrando imperio*, FHDR, II, p. 667.

²² N. Drăganu, *Românii din veacurile IX-XIV, pe baza toponimiei şi onomasticii*, Bucureşti, 1933, p. 7-24, referring to the older Hungarian and Romanian historiography; G. Brătianu, *Tradiţia istorică despre întemeierea statelor istorice româneşti*, Bucureşti, 1980, p. 190-200; St. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, I, 2nd edition, Cluj, 1972, p. 26-28; Gy. Györffy, *Az Árpád-kori Magyarországnak történelmi földrajza*, III, Budapest, 1987, p. 470; *Histoire de la Transylvanie*, red.: Béla Köpeczi, Budapest, 1992, p. 115-116; I. Aurel Pop, *Românii şi maghiarii în secolele IX – XIV*, Cluj Napoca, 1996, p. 70-71.

²³ IIR, I, 1934, p. 16-17; I. Lupaş, *Realităţi istorice în voievodatul Transilvaniei din sec. XII-XVI*, Bucureşti, 1938, p. 21.

²⁴ St. Pascu, *op.cit.*, p. 26-27; G. Brătianu, *op.cit.*, p. 195; I. Aurel Pop, *op.cit.*, p. 71; I. Bona, *Histoire de la Transylvanie*, p. 115-116.

²⁵ Anonymous, XI, p. 83.

*Wallachians had fight on the banks of the Timiș River, at the Sands' Ford. In this battle had died two of the Cumans' dukes and three leaders of the Bulgarians, while Glad had been forced to retreat in his fortress on the Danube, called Keve*²⁶. The chronicle suggests that the Bulgarian Empire politically controlled the Banat territory at the Lower Danube. At the same time, one can notice the most important fact that the Romanian population was already living within the space bordered by the Danube, Tisa and Mureș rivers and even northward at the time the Hungarians came²⁷.

The history of Banat around the year One Thousand is also reflected in a major source of information, as the legend called *Vita Sancti Gerardi Moresanae Ecclesiae Episcopi* is considered²⁸. Ahtum, a powerful lord, baptized in the fortress of Vidin held the southwestern land, from the river Criș to the parts of Transylvania and to the Vidin and Severin, according to the source. The flourishing economy of the Ahtum's "country" is suggested by the references to the multitude of herds, innumerable flocks, and to the courts and residences, which gave him strength and power²⁹. Relying on the strength of his warriors, more numerous than those of the Hungarian king, Ahtum had seized the control over the course of the Mureș River, the main route for salt transportation. This has caused the conflict with King Stephan I. *Legenda Sancti Gerardi* is perfectly illustrating the Banat's attributes of both cultural confluence area and confluence of the European medieval powers' interests³⁰.

The importance of the narrative Hungarian and Byzantine sources for the beginnings of the Middle Ages in Banat is indisputable. They record the presence of the Romanian population in this area at the time of the impact with the Hungarian conquerors and they represent a firsthand source for the knowledge of the geopolitical, cultural and religious realities from the eastern Lower Danube area.

One should mention, within the same category of the written sources referring to Banat, the **Turkish chronicles** and the **travelling notes**. The information in the Turkish chronicles is especially useful for the knowledge of the fortresses in the mountainous Banat³¹. The notes made by famous travelers like Evlia Celebi and Giovan Andrea Gromo, although dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, are still useful sources for

²⁶ *Ibidem*, XLIV, p. 110-111.

²⁷ G. Brătianu, *op.cit.*, p. 206.

²⁸ *S.R.H.*, II, p. 480-560; I.D. Suci, R. Constantinescu, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

²⁹ *Legenda Sancti Gerardi*, chapter X, I.D. Suci, R. Constantinescu, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

³⁰ R. Theodorescu, *Bizanț, Balcani, Occident. La începuturile culturii medievale românești (secolele X – XIV)*, București, 1974, p. 65.

³¹ *CTTR*, II, editor: M. Guboglu, București, 1974, p. 432; *Călători*, II, București, 1970, p. 328.

the reconstitution of the medieval habitat in Banat³².

The territory of Banat and the system of fortifications defending were part of a **military map** of south-eastern Europe in the 14th century. The map was added to *Tractatus de re military et machinis bellis* and has been realized by Paulus Sanctinus Ducensis for Sigismund of Luxembourg at the end of the 14th century. It has a particular importance for the history of the Romanian provinces, being the first cartographic representation of these lands³³. The Banat is represented on this map as crossed by two mountain ranges. The fortresses from Osona, Sicherino and Balasaban are standing on the north bank of the Danube. There are also Austrian cartographic documents dated at the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, especially useful for the location of the medieval Banat fortifications and for the historical geography of the province. Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli (1658 – 1730) had performed a remarkable cartographic activity in Banat. Plans and surveys of some Banat medieval fortifications, made by the officers from Marsigli's headquarters and kept in archives from Bologna had recently been published³⁴. Beside, one should mention the cartographic activity of Fr. Grisellini³⁵.

The onomastic sources also held names of places and persons from Banat. Onomastics reflects the connections between man and its geographical environment. As for the two categories of the onomastics, the anthroponymy and the toponymy, the last one had focused the attention of the linguists³⁶. Historians can use today an almost complete repertory of place names from Banat (including micro-toponymy from the mountainous area), that had proved its usefulness for the reconstitution of the medieval habitat³⁷. The Slavic character of place names in Banat, as Nicolae Iorga had early noticed, had been a preoccupation for both linguistic and historical research, looking for a plausible explanation of this phenomenon³⁸. The interdisciplinary research of the disappeared medi-

³² Călători, XI, București, 1976, p. 534.

³³ I. Dumitru-Snagov, *Țările Române în secolul al XIV-lea. Codex Latinus Parisinus*, București, 1979, p. 68-69, 82-92.

³⁴ G. Sebestyen, *RMM-MIA*, 1, 1986, p. 46 seqq.

³⁵ Fr. Grisellini, *Încercare de istorie politică și naturală a Banatului Timișoarei*, Timișoara, 1984 (preface, translation, notes: C. Feneșan); Al. Krischan, *SDA*, 6, 1963, p. 123-157, containing the index of the maps referring to Banat kept in the archives from Vienna.

³⁶ V. Ioniță, *Nume de locuri din Banat*, Timișoara, 1982, p. 209-299.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 251-273; N. Drăganu, *op.cit.*, p. 231 seqq.

³⁸ N. Iorga, *Observații și probleme bănățene*, București, 1940, p. 16; V. Ioniță, *op.cit.*, p. 209-226, regarding the Slavic and pseudo – Slavic toponymy from Banat; E. Petrovici, *SDT*, București, 1970, p. 138-141, 250-254; N. Drăganu, *op.cit.*, p. 231-255, regarding the Romanians from Banat.

eval settlements, based on information offered by toponymy, proves to be more useful and necessary than anywhere for the reconstitution of the historical geography of the medieval Banat, especially because of the large number of destroyed settlements. The heart of the medieval villages from Banat can only rarely be identified within the nowadays location of the village. It is a common fact that one or more such village heart is identified within a larger area, representing successive replacements of the same community. The same phenomenon can be noticed in the case of the medieval necropolis or necropolises. These Middle Age realities from Banat are backed by the place names within the nowadays boundaries of the villages, that still indicate abandoned settlements or necropolises. A frequent toponym, perpetuating the location of a disappeared settlement is that of **Săliște**. Another, more rare toponym, reminder of the location of some extinguished pit-houses, is that of **Zomonită**³⁹.

Certain place names, such as **Mormânțu**, **Mormânțu bătrân**, **Pograde**, **Moroasa** indicate the location of old cemeteries, which had belonged to abandoned and disappeared settlements⁴⁰. In southeastern Banat, place names like **Biserica bătrână**, **Dealul bisericii**, **Calea bisericii**, **Cetate**, **Biserica spartă** are associated with the cult monuments from the heart of the disappeared medieval villages. Of great importance is the topic of the ethno-demographic relations, as reflected by anthroponymy and toponymy. Both historians and linguists had studied the problem⁴¹. The study of the person names from the 14th – 15th century written sources have had a less intensity than its importance for the historic research would have required.

As it has already been said, the Banat, given its location in an area of European confluence, is dialectally conservative and ethnologic remarkable⁴², despite it's geographic position. Nicolae Iorga had seen the ethnology as a *source for another history of Banat*. The research methodology he proposed is to be connected to the historic thinking of the French School of Annales. The ethnological information in the works referring to the 18th

³⁹ V. Ioniță, *op.cit.*, p. 179-180, regarding the toponymy connected with old dwelling locations.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 181, 82, 83, for the significance of the toponym *Moroasa*, as located around old cemeteries and Medieval churches

⁴¹ N. Drăganu, *op.cit.*, p. 233-235, 250-266; E. Petrovici, *op.cit.*, p. 138-141, 250-254; V. Ioniță, *op.cit.*, p. 37-43; G. Györfly, *op.cit.*, p. 471-475; R. Popa, *Țara Hațegului*, p. 20.

⁴² B. P. Hașdeu, *Scrieri istorice*, II, 1973, p. 158-224; N. Iorga, *op.cit.* p. 9, 12, stating that the Banat villagers *are preserving to such an extent the clothing and the rituals coming from the far past that even for the "deaths' dance" should be admitted a continuity going back to the barbarian times*

century Banat are to be considered a link in the process of reconstituting older periods⁴³. Certainly, the use of the ethnological data requires certain prudence in handling it for the reconstitution of clearly delimited historical periods, as it has already been proved for the regions neighboring Banat. The importance of this data can not be yet denied, in connection to phenomena concerning the history of popular technologies or the history of mentalities⁴⁴. The promotion of interdisciplinary researches can only be beneficial for the historic reconstitution we have assumed, in offering access to the traditional sources.

⁴³ F. Grisalini, *op.cit.*, p. 173-189; J.J. Ehrler, *op.cit.*, p. 36-46; N. Stoica de Hațeg, *op.cit.*, p. 152-160.

⁴⁴ R. Popa, *op.cit.*, p. 22; I. Glodariu, *Arhitectura dacilor*, Cluj- Napoca, 1983, p. 22, proves the perpetual existence of house building technologies, starting with the Dacian epoch. For the existence of certain buildings representing ethnographic relicts, see L. Apolzan, *Carpații, tezaur de istorie. Perenitatea așezărilor risipite pe înălțimi*, București, 1987, p. 103-104 and fig. 7, representing an archaic building with conical roof.

II. HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE PROBLEM

More than a half of century ago, Nicolae Iorga, in one of his few works dedicated to the Banat, asserted categorically "a history of the Banat has not been written yet". With all the historiographic praiseworthy attempts, the great historian noticed the lack of a Romanian synthesis following the unsurpassed evolution of the life of the Dacian, Dacian-Roman and Romanian element, no matter what the mixture with foreign elements in the Romanian space would be¹.

History studies owed to I.D. Suciu, V. Neumann, Al. Krischan, R. Ardelean and N. Bocşan have analyzed the evolution of the historiography of the Banat or they have insisted just only on some of its sequences, from which the interest in medieval civilization was not absent. I.D. Suciu has critically analyzed, from the point of view of the Romanian orthodox confession, the evolution of the history works dedicated to medieval civilization in Banat in a general context, occasioned by a history of the religious life and the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Banat².

The starting point of the attempt of synthesis of the historiography of Banat, owed to V. Neumann, had been the analysis of the ideas and conceptions that were at the basis of historical works dedicated to the Middle Age Banat³. Fundamental sources of knowledge of the medieval history in Banat were emphasized by the Hungarian positivist historiography at the end of the 19th century. But it remained tributary to the political mentality of the time, which was unhappily reflected, also in the historical works⁴. German historiography brought essential contributions to the knowledge of the confessional history of the medieval Banat and of its historical geography⁵. Local historiography preoccupations during the period between wars, the directions in which they channeled themselves and the contributions brought by this constituted the favorite theme of research for R. Ardelean⁶. The dominant feature of the historiography of Banat, even from the moment of its genesis at the beginning of the modern epoch, is

¹ N. Iorga, *Observații și probleme bănățene*, București, 1940, p. 3-5.

² I.D. Suciu, *Monografia Mitropoliei Banatului*, Timișoara, 1977, p. 8-23.

³ V. Neumann, *Convergențe spirituale*, București, 1986, p. 131-177.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 159-161

⁵ Al. Krischan, *Deutsche Beiträge zur Banater Historiographie 1860-1980. Bibliographische Skizzen*, Freiburg i Br., 1993, p. 33-90.

⁶ R. Ardelean, *StIB*, 14, 1988, p. 14-23.

the multiculturalism. So, it reflects the historical and ethno-demographic specific character of the province at the beginning of the 18th century where Romanians, Germans, Serbs and Hungarians lived together. National historiographies were born from the desire of ethno-cultural identification and the anchorage of each national group in the province's past.

The analysis of the historiography of Banat, from this perspective, raises a series of matters concerning the method, conception and cultural ideology, admirably reflected in Nicolae Bocşan's recent study⁷. So, historiographic approach can globally incorporate the research of the Banat history, irrespective of cultural and national area or it can limit the investigation to the level of the achievements of province historiography.

Local history and a certain ethnocentrism, as reflex of the necessity for ethno-cultural identity, had always marked the national historiographies of Banat. The lack of a scientific center, gathering historians around, was another constant of historiography of Banat⁸. One can notice, for the last three decades, an obvious preoccupation of approaching the evolution of the historiography of Banat, as defined by two of its constants: multiculturalism and national identity.

Fr. Grisellini, considered to be the first historiographer of Banat, had written a history of this region as early as the end of the 18th century. "This race brother of ours", as Nicolae Iorga used to call him, "typical representative of Enlightening century, achieved a historical work about a province that he well knew, from the wish of bringing truthful information to a Europe that knew still little about the past and the inhabitants of Banat"⁹. Political history of the medieval Banat was rendered using the narrative sources published by Schwandtner in 1746¹⁰. Accordingly, the author narrates, as Anonimus tells, the conflict between "Sir Glad who was ruling over the country from Mureş to Horom fortress" and the Hungarian army¹¹. In the chapter dedicated to the Romanian language Grisellini mentioned the relationship between Romanian and Italian and other languages with a common origin in the popular Latin¹². Grisellini's History dedicated to the Banat contains very useful information whose value was remarkable in the 18th century when the work was written. His work must be appreciated

⁷ N. Bocşan, *Banatica*, 14, 1996, p. 265-282.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 266-271.

⁹ Fr. Grisellini, *op. cit.*, p. 22-23.

¹⁰ M. Schwandtner, *Scriptores rerum hungaricum*, I-II, Vindobonae, 1746.

¹¹ Fr. Grisellini, *op. cit.*, p. 36-37 and following.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 190, "I have been living in a country where I have met a people whose language proves that it is the successor of the Roman colonists from the antiquity. It is known that they were brought here by Nerva Traian after the conquest of the Dacian kingdom". See N. Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 4, note 4.

as both a reference moment of the historiography of the Banat and a very useful historical source¹³.

Historical preoccupations present in the program of the romantic generation, historical works dedicated to the Banat by A.T. Laurean¹⁴, V. Maniu¹⁵, N. Tincu Velia¹⁶ had not brought any notable documentary contributions or novelties in the historical conceptions.

Medieval history of Banat was included in a vast coherent program of the **Hungarian historiography**, directed and coordinated by The Hungarian Academy in the second half of the 19th century, and sustained by professional historians. Pesty Fr. was among these historians and he promoted modern working methods specific of the positivist historiography. Qualitative leap of the historiography from Banat can be perceived in the same time with the enlargement of the basis of information through the issue of the first documentary collections dedicated to this zone. Fr. Pesty's publishing activity is remarkable, given the volumes of documents dedicated to the Caraș County as well as to the ex-Romanian counties from the Banat of Severin¹⁷. Starting from this rich documentary basis, the Hungarian historian achieved the first historical geography of the Southern Banat¹⁸. He wrote micro-monographs of the medieval settlements that had disappeared, attempting to identify them with the help of toponymy or other historical sources. The written information was at the basis of the reconstitution of historical geography dedicated both to the existent settlements and to the waste and disappeared ones. With the inherent gaps for such an ample work, the historical geography dedicated to Caraș and Severin counties constituted an exceptional historiographic achievement with a solid documentary basis and a modern working conception. Political mentalities with nationalist tendencies characteristic of the end of the 19th century, historical conceptions concerning Romanians' emigration, although present in Pesty's works, will be evident in J. Szentkláray's historical works¹⁹ and of others dedicated to the counties of the southern

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 17, with C. Feneșan's observations.

¹⁴ A.T. Laurean, *Țemișana sau scurtă istorie a Banatului Țemișan*, București, 1848

¹⁵ V. Maniu, *Disertațiune istorico-critică și literară tractând despre originea românilor din Dacia Traiană*, Timișoara, 1857, see critical observations to V. Neumann, *op. cit.*, p. 152-154..

¹⁶ N. Tincu Velia, *Istorieară bisericască politico-națională*, Sibiu, 1865; I. D. Suci, *Nicolae Tincu-Velia (1816-1867). Viața și opera lui*, București, 1945, p. 140 and following; N. Bocșan, *Contribuții la istoria iluminismului românesc*, Timișoara, 1986, p. 180

¹⁷ Pesty Fr., *Krassó*, III-IV, Budapesta, 1882-1883, Idem, *Szörény*, III, Budapesta, 1878; Idem, *Oláh Kerületek*, Budapesta, 1876.

¹⁸ Pesty Fr., *Krassó*, I-II, Budapesta, 1884, Idem, *Szörény*, II, Budapesta, 1878.

¹⁹ Szentkláray J., *Krassó vármegye őshajdana*, Budapesta, 1900.

Banat, as well as in other studies of the Hungarian historiography dedicated to the confessional history²⁰. In the spirit of the same tendencies, the annihilation of historical and geographical individuality of the Banat by denominating it with the word South Hungary (*Delmagyarország*) was promoted in the Hungarian historiography at the end of the 19th century. The history of the personalities of Banat, where the families of some Romanian nobles (Bizerea, Cema, Mâtnic) are also included, is included in the research program of the Hungarian positivist historiography²¹.

Creation of a society of history and archaeology in 1872, at Timișoara, impelled the studies of local history of Banat²². Studies of political, cultural and confessional history dedicated to the medieval Banat, as well as archaeological and numismatic repertoires belonging to I. Berkeszi²³ and F. Milleker²⁴ were published in the magazine of the scientific society from Timișoara.

The research of the Banat history was also part of the program of **German historiography** from Banat. J. Schwicker and L. Böhm's works brought out new information about the political history of the Banat following the already established clichés²⁵. It is fitted to remind Felix Milleker's²⁶ remarkable activity, which was the custodian of the Museum of Vrșac between 1894 and 1942. The contributions at the local history of the southern Banat can be found in the above 20 written monographs. As historian and archaeologist, he used the written documentary information critically corroborated with the information offered by toponimy and archaeology so that to reconstitute monographically the history of some settlements as Biserica Albă, Vrșac, Pančevo and others²⁷.

His work dedicated to the historical geography of the medieval Banat constitutes a reference for the historiography of Banat at the beginning of

²⁰ Karácsony J., *TRÉT*, 1905, p. 76-87; Szentkláray J., *A szerb monostoregyházak történeti emlékei Delmagyarországon*, Budapest, 1908, p. 46-51 and 57-61.

²¹ M. Lendvai, *Temes vármegye nemes családjai*, I-III, Budapest, 1896-1905; Wertner M., *A magyar nemzetség a XIV század Közepéig*, I-II, Timișoara, 1891.

²² L. Kakucs, *Banatica*, IV, 1977, p. 473-477; A. Bejan, *Banatul în secolele IV-XII*, Timișoara, 1995, p. 21-22, note 51.

²³ I. Berkeszi, *TRÉT*, 1907.

²⁴ B. Milleker, *TRÉT*, 1909.

²⁵ J.H. Schwicker, *Geschichte des Temeser Banats*, Budapest, 1872, 2nd edition, p. 6-32; L. Böhm, *Geschichte des Temeser Banats*, Lipsca, 1861, I-III.

²⁶ A. Scherer, *Felix Milleker, (1858-1942)*, München, 1983, p. 18-25.

²⁷ F. Milleker, *Geschichte der kön Freistadt Werschetz*, Budapest, 1886; Idem, *Geschichte der Grossgemeinde Kuszics, 1387-1907*; Weisskirchen, 1907. Idem, *TRÉT*, 5, 1889, p. 72-81; Idem, *Geschichte der stadt Pančevo*, 1925.

the 20th century²⁸. The modern working method, that he had already used in the anterior achievement of micromonographs of localities, where he critically connected the documentary information with the field data, led to a correct identification of many medieval settlements deserted and disappeared from Banat.

Born in the mountainous zone of the Banat, the Swabian historian Theodor Ortway-Orthmayr (1869-1914) had dealt with the ecclesiastic history and historical geography of this province²⁹.

In the multicultural atmosphere of the Banat from the beginning of the 20th century, the Romanian point of view in historiography was sustained by the syntheses of regional history owed to Patriciu Dragalina and Gheorghe Popoviciu³⁰. Political history rendered in its chronological succession occupies the central place in presenting the Middle Ages Banat. One can distinguish polemic accents as regarding the Hungarian historiography concerned with the ethno -genesis and Romanians' presence in the space that they have occupied since the beginnings of the Middle Age. With all the errors, and sometimes without a solid documentary support, G. Popoviciu's attempt of writing the history of Banat pointed out a superior stage and a qualitative leap of the Romanian historiography from Banat.

The absence of some professional historians and of a well-defined research program of the medieval history of Banat, sustained by the Romanian Academy obviously marked the Romanian historiography at the beginning the 20th century. Unlike other national historiographies from Banat, which had an institutional support, the Romanian historiography³¹ lacked such an institutional frame. The Orthodox bishopric in Caransebeș and the Greek - Catholic bishopric in Lugoj, along with the confessional Romanian schools from Banat, founded relatively late, could not offer a solid support of the Romanian historical research from the very beginning.

The historical research in the period between the two World Wars marked the emergence of an intellectual group with historical preoccupations, who tried to compensate the absence of an academic center in this Romanian province. Historiographic activity during this period circumscribes to the historic cultural phenomenon known as "creative localism"³². Archaeological investigation of a monument of medieval architecture owed

²⁸ B. Milleker, *Délmagyarország középkori földrajza*, Budapest, 1915.

²⁹ Al. Krischan, *op. cit.*, p. 49-61.

³⁰ P. Dragalina, *Din istoria Banatului Severin*, I-III, Caransebeș, 1899; G. Popoviciu, *Istoria românilor bănățeni*, Lugoj, 1901.

³¹ N. Bocșan, *op. cit.*, p. 268-269.

³² A. Zub, *Istorie și istorici în România interbelică*, Iași, p. 179-184.

to I. Miloia remained, for a very long period, an exception³³. These studies will be restarted only in the 7th decade of the 20th century.

The main role in unifying the human and material efforts implied in the historical research had The Banat-Crișana Social Institute from Timișoara. In 1943 a history section of this institute was constituted under Victor Motogna's³⁴ leadership. It was thus resumed an old idea and wish of working up a Romanian history of the Banat, reflecting the native people's life³⁵. The promoters of this historiographic trend in Banat were personalities that had become inured to historical means and sources, but were not real historians³⁶. The historian V. Motogna occupies a special place among them, given his studies dedicated to the Middle Ages Banat³⁷. Among his themes, one can distinguish the theme of the autochthonous feudal institutions, of the Romanian districts, the confessional situation in the Banat at the beginning of the Middle Ages and the fundamental problem of the Romanian historiography – the Romanians' ethno-genesis³⁸. V. Motogna proposed a regressive working method in the attempt of reconstitution of the medieval history of Banat, which would be successfully used later by the Romanian historiographers³⁹.

The origin and delimitation of the Romanian districts were recurrently approached inside the inter-war historiography of the Banat without always achieving the essential matters concerning this problem⁴⁰. Gh. Cotoșman approached the problems concerning the Romanian orthodox ecclesiastic institutional history initiating hypotheses and trying demonstrations without a documentary support as concerns the bishopric of Mehadia, for example⁴¹. The historiography of Banat, trying to present medieval history in a Romanian perspective, combated immigration the-

³³ I. Miloia, *AnB*, III, 4, 7, 1930, p. 36-53.

³⁴ *RISBC*, XI, 1943, p. 1.

³⁵ *RISBC*, XI, 1943, p. 1, a little time before, N. Iorga had dealt with the same matter in an identical way, see G. Popoviciu, *op. cit.*, p. IV.

³⁶ R. Ardelean, *St/B*, 14, 1988, p. 15-16, 20-21.

³⁷ V. Motogna, *Banatul de altădată. Studii istorice*, I, Timișoara, 1944, p. 3-69, 229-329.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 3-19, p. 31-60.

³⁹ *Idem*, *RISBC*, XI, 1943, p. 5; the historian R. Popa made it a working historical method in reconstitution of historical realities in Transylvania.

⁴⁰ I. Vuia, *AnB*, II, 1929, p. 6 and following; N. Tomici, *RISBC*, X, 1942, p. 597-600; G. Cotoșman, *RISBC*, XIII, 1944, p. 367-390.

⁴¹ G. Cotoșman, *Episcopia Caransebeșului până în pragul sec. al XIX-lea*, Caransebeș, 1941, p. 12-40; *Idem*, *Contribuții la istoria Banatului Timișan și al Severinului. Problema continuității Episcopiei Mehadiei*, Craiova, 1943.

ses of the older Hungarian historiography or reiterated in the contemporaneous studies and documents.

Two fundamental works concerning the ecclesiastic catholic organization and structure in Banat owed to the German historian K. Juhász complete the inter-war historiography in Banat⁴². One has to mention a series of achievements in the domain of ethnological research of the Romanian village in Banat, as well as the linguistic studies dedicated to an ethnic Slavic group in Banat that vary the interdisciplinary historical research of the epoch⁴³.

The interest of the historical research for this zone had grown especially during the last three decades. First of all, an enlargement and a diversification of the documentary basis for this new stage of the evolution of the historiography in Banat came out. Chancellery documents concerning the medieval history of Banat⁴⁴ were published and scientifically re-evaluated. Maria Holban's studies dedicated to the medieval Banat represent a model of historical analysis, a methodological approach of subjects at the European historiography level. The thorough analysis of chancellery documents offered the author the possibility of revealing unsuspected realities of the Romanian medieval world⁴⁵.

Maria Holban's scientific contributions concerning the problem of the relations of the Hungarian Kingdom with the Romanian Country during the 13th – 14th centuries, the history of the Banat of Severin remaining a model of historical research⁴⁶.

The role played by the Romanian elite from Banat was a permanent topic of the recent historiography from Transylvania and Banat. One can not approach the medieval history of Banat without taking into account the remarkable contributions brought by Ion Drăgan and Ligia Boldea⁴⁷.

The problem of the Romanian medieval institutions in Banat had been a constant preoccupation of the Romanian historical research dur-

⁴² K. Juhász, *Die Stifte der Tschanader Diözese im Mittelalter*, 1927; idem, *Das Tschanad Temesvarer Bistum im frühen Mittelalter 1030-1307*, Münster, 1930.

⁴³ R. Vuia, *Le village roumain de Transylvanie et du Banat*, București, 1938 (extras); E. Petrovici, *Graiul carașovenilor. Studiu de diacologie slavă meridională*, București, 1935.

⁴⁴ C. Feneșan, *DMB*, Timișoara, 1981

⁴⁵ M. Holban, *SMIM*, II, 1957, p. 407-417; idem, *SMIM*, V, 1962, p. 57-128.

⁴⁶ Idem, *Din cronică relațiilor româno-ungare în secolele XIII-XIV*, București, 1981, p. 49-90, p. 126-154.

⁴⁷ I. Drăgan, *Nobilimea românească din Transilvania, 1440-1514*, București, 2000; L. Boldea, *Nobilimea românească din Banat în secolele XIV-XVI. Origine, statut, studiu genealogic*, Reșița, 2002.

ing the last three decades. We have to mention Costin Feneșan's historiographical approaches that aimed at a new interpretation of the historical information, following the enlargement of the documentary basis. An older preoccupation for institutional history, the medieval districts in Banat had been dealt with by C. Feneșan, Viorel Achim and other historians of the younger generation⁴⁸. Avram Andea had also tackled the origin and the evolution of the principality institution in the medieval Banat. His work is meritorious because it reconstituted the history of a Romanian institution during a long chronological sequence and its relations with the feudal institutions imposed by the Hungarian royalty⁴⁹. The research of the knezes' and knezdoms' history in Banat gave the author the occasion of a structural analysis of social history, offering a clear image of the fiscal bonds, military duties and the principality jurisdiction, on the basis of documentary information.

Gh. Ciulei studied the problems of medieval law in Banat. The retrospective analysis of some lawsuits, trials, of some pledging acts emphasized elements of old law tradition applied in the Romanian medieval period in Banat⁵⁰.

Historical geography of the Middle Ages Banat, a favorite theme in the Hungarian positivist historiography, had been re-assessed on the basis of an increased documentary information and with another working method. We have to mention here the historical geography of Arpadian Hungary elaborated by Gy. Györffy, as well as the third tome with references to the southern region of Banat and the extremely useful historical dictionary worked out by Engel Pál for the Timișoara – Moldova Veche⁵¹ area. Still, one had to notice certain reserves of the Romanian historiography as concerning the working method and the results. P. Binder and M. Bizerea⁵² dealt with the medieval historical geography of Banat, i.e. the identification of some disappeared settlements and fortifications or the boundaries of certain districts. Some of the proposed solutions and certain hypotheses insufficiently backed by documentation had suffered amendments.

⁴⁸ C. Feneșan, *Banatica*, 5, 1977, p. 265-274; V. Achim, *AnB*, 2, 1993, p. 245-258; R. Popa, *SCIVA*, 40, 4, 1989, p. 353-370; D. Teicu, *SCIVA*, 40, 1, 1989, p. 57-72; I.A. Pop, *Instituțiile medievale românești. Adunările cneziale și nobiliare (boierești) din Transilvania în secolele XIV-XVI*, Cluj-Napoca, 1991, p. 67-75; V. Achim, *Banatica*, 9, 1987, p. 371-372; idem, *Rdl*, 41, 2, 1988, p. 191-203; idem, *Rl*, III, 9-10, 1992, p. 917-927.

⁴⁹ A. Andea, *Banatul cnezial până la Instăpânirea habsburgică (1718)*, Reșița, 1996.

⁵⁰ Gh. Ciulei, *Banatica*, 5, 1977, p. 285-289; idem, *Banatica*, 6, 1981, p. 225-236.

⁵¹ Gy Györffy, *op. cit.*, III, p. 305-321, 469-498; P. Engel, *A. Temesvári és Moldovai szandzsák törökkori települései (1554-1579)*, Szeged, 1996.

⁵² P. Binder, *St Rl*, 21, 4, 1968, p. 625-639; idem, *AllC*, 7, 1964, p. 321-325; M. Bizerea and Fl. Bizerea, *StB*, 5, 1978, p. 199.

The Byzantinologist M. Gyóny's study, published in 1947, opened a new perspective on the beginnings of the ecclesiastic organization in Banat⁵³. The integration of the Banat history within the south – eastern European cultural and confessional context at the beginning of the Middle Ages can be found in the studies of the canonical Catholic - Greek A. Tăutu⁵⁴.

Problems specific to the medieval Banat, concerning the political history, the evolution of the administrative, judicial and church institutions as well as a series of matters referring to the medieval habitat are incorporated into the four volumes dedicated to the Principality of Transylvania by Ștefan Pascu⁵⁵. The approach of the cultural history of the Lower Danube area in the 10th - 14th centuries offered the historian Răzvan Theodorescu the needed context to emphasize the role of the Banat as a "cultural corridor" in this south-eastern European zone⁵⁶. Vasile Munteanu's recent history synthesis of the Banat offers a vague and inconclusive view about the Banat Middle Ages⁵⁷.

Medieval archaeology investigations during the last three decades had brought to light important data, but their scientific utilization did not reach the high level and the importance of the discoveries. The Banat museums have constituted a decisive factor in promoting the research and utilization of the Banat medieval history. Synthesis studies concerning the history of this province during the 3rd – 4th centuries and the 4th-12th centuries realized by Doina Benea and Adrian Bejan offer an image of the archaeological accumulations from Banat⁵⁸. Serbian historiography, especially N. Stanojev's, Milica and Djordje Janković's studies dedicated to some more extended spaces from the western Lower Danube zone deal also with problems specific to the southern zone of Banat⁵⁹. Some archaeological monographs dedicated to some medieval settlements from

⁵³ M. Gyóny, *RHC*, XXV, 6, 1, 1947, p. 42-49.

⁵⁴ A. Tăutu, *Antemurale*, III, Roma, 1956, p. 51-79, idem, *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, III, 2, Città del Vaticano, 1964, p. 367-393.

⁵⁵ Șt. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei I*, Cluj-Napoca, 1972; II, 1979; III, 1986; IV, 1989.

⁵⁶ R. Theodorescu, *op. cit.*, p. 340-341.

⁵⁷ V. Munteanu, *Contribuții la istoria Banatului*, Timișoara, 1990, p. 65-107.

⁵⁸ D. Benea, *Dacia sud-vestică în secolele III-IV*, Timișoara, 1996; A. Bejan, *Banatul în secolele IV-XII*, Timișoara, 1995.

⁵⁹ N. Stanojev, *Nekropole X-XV veka u Vojvodini*, Novi sad, 1989; M. and Dj. Janković, *Sloveni u jugoslovenskom podunavlju*, Belgrad, 1990; M. Jovanović, *Srpski manastiri u Banatu*, Novi Sad, 2000.

⁶⁰ D. Țicu, Gh. Lazarovici, *Gomea. Din arheologia unui sat medieval din Clisura Dunării*, Reșița, 1996.

Banat⁶⁰ have also to be mentioned.

Historical and archaeological researches of the last three decades point out, undoubtedly, the accumulations of the Banat historiography concerned with the beginnings of the Middle Age, but in the same measure, emphasize many problems of the future research. Medieval archaeology has to play a very important role, as a primary source of information on the history of the Banat in the 4th-12th centuries, but also for the later periods. Our monographic approach is part of the zonal research of certain Romanian territories, successfully studied by the Romanian historiography in the last years. We have started the research of the southern Banat two decades ago, referring to global aspects of the medieval habitat. The results of these investigations can be found in the archaeological studies and reports⁶¹.

⁶¹ D. Teicu, *Arheologia satului medieval din Banat*, Reșița, 1996; *Acta MN*, 18, 1981, p. 491-500; *SCIVA*, 34, 3, 1983, p. 274-286; *SCIVA*, 40, 1, 1989, p. 57-72; *Banatica*, 12, 1, 1993, p. 230-272; *AM*, 1, 1996, p. 9-34.

III. MEDIEVAL CIVILISATION IN THE MOUNTAINOUS BANAT

1. Heart of the Medieval Village

The genesis and the evolution of the medieval village had permanently preoccupied of the Romanian historiography, being approached by historians, archaeologists, philologists and ethnologists¹. Starting from the generally accepted definition of the village as a permanent settlement whose inhabitants practice agriculture, a reconstitution of the rural habitat had been tried, on the basis of the written historical, archaeological and linguistic information. The contribution of the medieval archaeology to the knowledge of the rural habitat in the 10th - 14th centuries had been unanimously recognized and emphasized. The periodical summarizing moments in the Romanian historiography, concerning the research of the medieval village, had emphasized the accumulations, the researching methods, but also the extremely important desiderata still unsolved². The actual research stage of the medieval village in Transylvania and Banat emphasizes an extremely reduced number of investigated settlements and fewer of them scientifically processed. A recent evaluation of the present moment of the Romanian medieval archaeology has pointed out the priorities of the research in this domain³.

Reconstitution of the image of a medieval village supposes the knowledge of the proper heart or hearts of the settlement and of the activity space, traces of the agricultural and handicraft activity, of the roads, of the cult monument, of the necropolis and, last but not least, of the individual or collective fortification⁴. The complete knowledge of each sequence of the rural habitat offers the required information to reconstitute the entire image of the medieval village. It has been already pointed out that partial research, through archaeological test trenches, of a medieval village can

¹ I. I. Rusu, *AMET*, 1966, p. 74-75; C. Daicoviciu, *Dacica*, Cluj-Napoca, 1969, p. 586; N. Constantinescu, *Coconi. Un sat din Câmpia Română în epoca lui Mircea cel Bătrân*, București, 1972, p. 14; V. Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, Chișinău, 1994, p. 106-150; 229-306.

² R. Popa, *SCIVA*, 30, 4, 1979, p. 556; M. Matei, *SCIVA*, 30, 3, 1979, p. 420; P. Iambor, *ACTA MN*, 20, 1983, p. 505-506.

³ A. A. Rusu, *AM*, I, 1996, p. 7-8.

⁴ V. Janssen, *AAWG*, 101, 3, 1977, p. 291-324; idem, *VF*, 22, 1979, p. 101-119; H. Jankuhn, *VF*, 22, 1979, p. 29 "Siedlung mit ihrem Wirtschaftsraum", R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 556; P. Iambor, *op. cit.*, p. 506; J. Kazmierczyk, M. Młynarska-Kaletyn, Z. Podwinska, *Arch. Pol.*, 10, 1968, p. 171-174; D. Minić, *Balkanoslavica*, 6, 1977, p. 109-113; A. Habovstia, *Stredoveká dedina na Slovensku*, Bratislava, 1985, p. 100-125, 203-215.

only offer limited answers and reduces the chances of a global reconstitution of the medieval habitat from a certain area. Very few settlements from the Romanian space have benefited an exhaustive archaeological research followed by a reconstitution on the basis of the information from the written and archaeological sources.

The research of the 10th - 14th century's villages from Banat had interested historians, archaeologists and ethnologists also, who had analyzed village's hearts, necropolis, toponymy and historical geography of the region corresponding to the period. Chancellery documents have offered information on the medieval settlements during the 13th - 14th centuries; accordingly, archaeology has to offer complementary documentation for this chronological period.

The role played by the medieval archaeology of the early period between the 10th-12th centuries, for which there are no written sources is very important.

Archaeological investigation of the medieval villages from Banat started only three decades ago. The heart of the settlement from Gomea in the Danube Iron Gates had been investigated especially between 1973-1979. Archaeological excavations from Gomea - *Zomonîță* and *Țămurii*, where some dwelling traces from the 12th-13th centuries were identified, had a testing and rescue character, unlike the research from the same period from *Căunița de Sus*, where an 8th century settlement was investigated. The 12th-13th centuries necropolis from Gomea was investigated in 1978-1980 and 1989. A number of 65 graves, representing only a part of the necropolis, have been investigated. Burials from the 14th-15th centuries, certainly connected to the settlement from Gomea, were found through test excavations in 1969 and 1973 on the *Țărcheviște* hill situated in the proximity of the necropolis from *Căunița de Sus*⁵. The excavations from Gomea pointed out an extremely important archaeological site, the only one that benefited a monographic approach of the medieval habitat (Fig. 15). In the same area of the Danube Iron Gates, one should mention the excavations from the 11th - 13th centuries settlement from Moldova Veche - *Fiât*. Identified in 1970, the medieval settlement was investigated in 1975 - 1978. The partial research from Moldova Veche had not defined the settlement's area, the density of dwellings and the contemporary necropolis situated in its vicinity. Fortuitous discoveries confirmed through archaeological excavations have proved the existence of some habitations from the same period (11th - 13th centuries) on the Danube terraces from Moldova Veche, whose proportion can be proved only by systematical research⁶.

⁵ D. Țeicu, Gh. Lazarovici, *op. cit.*, p. 44-92.

⁶ I. Uzum, *Banatica*, 5, 1979, p. 225-234, D. Țeicu, O. Bozu, *Acta MN*, 19, 1982, p. 393.

The medieval archaeological research from Ilidia, a settlement located in the hilly zone of the Oravița Depression started in 1969 and they continued until 1985. A medieval fortification located on the Oblița hill and a wall church with an earth fortification from the 13th century on the Cetate hill⁷ had been excavated. The heart of the medieval village (the 13th - 14th centuries) identified in the Vicinic river meadows, between the Oblița and Cetate hills has been investigated between 1973 and 1985. The researches from Ilidia concerning the medieval habitat have brought important information for the knowledge of the medieval wall architecture⁸.

The Bârzava valley along its superior and middle course was the object of the archaeological researches in 1986 - 1990. By taking over the excavations of the ruins of a church from Reșița - Moroasa and corroborating the archaeological information with that from the chancellor's documents proved the existence of a Romanian chieftain residence at the origin of medieval Reșița⁹. The research from Bocșa, even if partial, brought explanations concerning the plan of a wall fortification from the 14th century¹⁰. The excavations from Berzovia between 1986 - 1987, presented the plan of a church from the second half of the 14th century, which was identified, on the basis of the written information, with the parish church of the disappeared village Remetea (Fig. 4). In the same zone of the Bârzava valley, there were found traces of some wooden constructions from the 14th century assigned to the medieval court Remetea of Himfy nobles. Surface discoveries and excavations have placed the heart of certain medieval villages at Ramna, Berzovia, Ghertenish and Șoșdea¹¹.

The discovery of the necropolis from the 12th-13th centuries from Șopotul Vechi, in the Almăj Depression determined the research of a Romanian homogeneous zone that is mentioned in the chancellor's documents only from the 15th century¹².

The necropolis from Cuptoare, Romanian settlement from Mehadia district, was investigated between 1977 and 1985. It contained 347 graves assigned to the 12th - 15th centuries¹³. The funeral inventory and the geographic position inside the Romanian medieval habitation have defined

⁷ D. Țicu, *Banatica*, 9, 1987, p. 327; I. Uzum, *AMM-MIA*, 2, 1988, p. 44 with a lacunary presentation and full of inadvertence of the medieval archaeologists research from Ilidia.

⁸ D. Țicu, *Arheologia satului medieval din Banat, Reșița*, 1996, p. 77-81.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 6-20.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 21-25.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 38-45.

¹² Idem, *Crisia*, 21, 1991, p. 308-310.

¹³ I. Uzum, *Banatica*, 9, 1987, p. 281-315; D. Țicu, *Banatica*, 12/1, 1993, p. 231-

the archaeological site from Cuptoare as one of the most important achievements of the medieval archaeological research in Banat. Scientific evaluation of the discoveries from Cuptoare, far from the proper approach requested by their importance, as well as the irrecoverable loss of site documentation, qualifies the necropolis from Cuptoare as one of the great failures of the Romanian medieval archaeology.

The architectural monuments from Mehadia focused attention even from the very moment of beginning of the medieval archaeology¹⁴. The fortification on the *Grad* hill was the first investigated monument. The excavations between 1984-1985 marked the identification of a hall church and of a village heart of the 12th - 13th centuries on the bank of the Bela Reca River¹⁵.

The investigation of the medieval habitat in the Timiș passage had a sporadic character determined by accidental findings. The heart of a medieval settlement from the 11th - 12th centuries was mentioned at Caransebeș in the Timiș river meadow. There are also some graves from a larger, 12th - 13th centuries necropolis from the same area¹⁶. The researches from Obreja of a wall monument and a necropolis mark the integration of the Bistra valley within the priorities of the medieval archaeology. The wall fortifications from the southern Banat have benefited a certain interest of the archaeological research of the period. The fortifications from Pescari, Jdloara and Vrșac have benefited by a scientific approach¹⁷. The researches from Orșova, though extremely important for the knowledge of the beginning of fortification architecture have remained unknown, with minimal chances of being adequately published. Beside other objectives from Banat and Transylvania, it is certain that the research from Orșova can be registered among the failures of the Romanian medieval archaeology. The supposed monuments from Palanca and Cuvin, documented as early as the 10th century, were not given the attention of the Serbian archaeologists.

A summary of the medieval archaeology researches in the last three decades in the mountainous zone of Banat point out, on one hand, the tendency of a global research of the habitat and, on the other hand, some of the accumulations achieved. Material means and human force drawn into research have enabled only a few of the medieval archaeological sites to be exhaustively and scientifically approached. This aspect of historical reconstitution has negatively influenced historical evaluations on the medieval habitat in Banat. Significant accumulations can be regis-

¹⁴ St. Matei, *Studii de istoria artei*, Cluj-Napoca, 1982, p. 110.

¹⁵ D. Teicu, *AM*, 1996, p. 15.

¹⁶ A. Bejan, P. Rogozea, *StCIEC*, 4, 1982, p. 220; E. Iaroslavski, *Banatica*, 3, 1975, p. 361-362.

¹⁷ St. Matei, *op. cit.*, p. 106-122.

tered only in the research of the beginning of the ecclesiastic and fortification architecture, given the Banat inauspicious fate in this respect.

We know 35 sites where dwelling traces have been identified, certifying the heart of some settlements from the 10th - 14th centuries. Their location on the Southern Banat map reflects, in our opinion, only the actual stage of research and the intensity with which different micro-zones have been investigated. In this context, there are some observations concerning the location of the heart of the medieval villages to be made. The villages' heart was usually located in the proximity of river courses. The rivers' meadow constituted a favorite place of building a village. The settlements are thread in row along a river's course as systematic research of the Vicinic and Ciclova rivers' valleys have proved. Along the Vicinic valley, from the source to the river mouth, the first located medieval settlement is at the foot of the hills from Ilidia. Groups of dwellings from the 14th century were identified in the Săliște river's meadow (Fig. 2). Surface findings suggest that medieval dwelling has extended along the riverbed and in the narrower zone towards the sources guarded by the summits of some hills, 300-400 m in height. The heart of some settlements from the same period located in the Vicinic meadow were found at Ciuchici - Săliște, Rusova Nouă, Berliște, Milcoveni and Iam¹⁶. The same location of the settlements points out the mapping of the discoveries from the Ciclova brook and from its collateral valleys: the dwelling from the 14th century and the necropolis were identified among the hills from Ciclova Română, succeeded along the riverbed at Răcășdia, Vrăniuț, Iertof. The discovery of some 12th - 13th centuries settlements at Ilidia and Vrăniuț suggest that the same habitat was preferred also during the 10th - 12th centuries. Traces of dwelling from the 14th-15th centuries, identified at Slatina Nera on a high hill that separates the Nera Valley from the Vicinic Valley prove that floods raised the villages up in higher zones because in the hilly zone the meadows were narrower and menaced. Rivers with narrow meadows, usually guarded by steep hills as for example Bela Reca, offered little place for a village location. North of Mehadia, in the *Ullici* area, the hills lower in slow steep to almost 100 m above the Bela Reca riverbed. Dwellings from the 12th - 13th centuries and a cult monument with a necropolis around it were identified in this narrow zone. The 14th century settlements identified on the middle course of Bârzava had the heart in the confluence zone of the meadow with the hills that guard the valley. The situations from Ramna, Berzovia, Gherteniș and Șoșdea are typical for this case. The settlements' location in the higher zone of the valley is explained by the danger of the high floods of the big rivers. The hills of Banat, 200-300 m high, had sheltered medieval settlements as those archaeologically identified at

¹⁶ D. Telcu, *op. cit.*, p. 336-338.

Cârnecea, Forotic and other.

Sporadic findings at Anina, in the Anina Mountains or at Văliug in the zone of the Semenic Mountains, prove just an exploitation of the zone and not the existence of some permanent settlements in the mountainous zones with altitudes over 700 m.. Archaeological research of the medieval habitat in Banat has not produced for the moment evidences proving the existence of some permanent settlements in the higher areas (700-900 m).

Delimitation of the proper heart of a medieval settlement can be done only following systematic archaeological research. The investigations from Gornea, Moldova Veche and Ilidia had covered a certain ratio, without being exhaustive. The village heart from the 12th - 13th centuries from Gornea was located in the *Țămurii* and *Zomonîță* zone, along the Camenița riverbed on a surface of 300/200-m (Fig. 3). Only the tenth part of this surface was excavated and there were found traces of 14 features, most of them belong to the 12th - 13th centuries¹⁹. At Ilidia - *Săliște*, between the Vicinic and Mășcășeni riverbeds, on a surface of 500/200 m, the heart of a 14th century settlement was investigated, with only 4 features identified (Fig. 5). Archaeological excavations from Moldova Veche – *Rât* have discovered 10 features from the 12th - 13th centuries, on a terrace of the Danube. The summarily data obtained from the archaeological research of a medieval village heart, the only one able to offer an extremely summary real image, do not allow a definite ending from this point of view. They have proved but the existence of the settlements from the 10th - 12th centuries. Future research should define their heart and dwelling area.

The chancellery documents of the 14th century concerning the settlements from Banat point to an internal structure of the settlement's heart. The houses, the yards or the places for yards inside a village were mentioned in documents on some devastation, patrimonial conflicts or of some pledges. A place of yard from *Guluez* village heart ("*unum locum curiae de Guluez*") was pledged in 1355 for one mark and a half²⁰. The houses of *Suran* village, from the Bârzava valley, were destroyed in 1364 during the permanent conflict between Himfy nobles from Remetea and the owner of Cuiești fortress²¹. In 1369, Șoșdea village from the same zone had 24 yards placed along a lane ("*duodecium curiae in linea occidentale eiusdem ville... duodecium curiae a parte orientali*")²².

¹⁹ D. Țeicu, Gh. Lazarovici, *op. cit.*, p. 48-58.

²⁰ *DAH*, C, X, 1977, p. 348.

²¹ *DAH*, C, XII, 1985, p. 244

²² *DAH*, C, XIII, 1994, p. 628.

Chancellery documents from the second half of the 14th century mention the yards, places for yards and "*Una platea civitatis penes Paganch*"²³ in Ersig settlement. The written sources known as early as the middle of the 14th century do not permit one to set the way in which the villages from Banat got a certain structure within built-up area. Certainly, in all cases, the nature of the ground had an important role in the internal organization of medieval villages. The researches from Berzovia, followed by the identification of the parish church from Remetea and the traces of a medieval yard, suggest the intern organization of Remetea village to a certain extent. The parish church and the necropolis lied at the basis of the hill and of Ciclău wood, and the village is northwards located, towards the Bârzava meadow, as the ceramic discoveries suggest. Trace of some wooden constructions forming part of Remetea yard was identified on an elevation located southwest of the monument. Therefore, both the church and the necropolis had an eccentric position, as they were situated at the northern limit of Remetea heart in the second half of the 14th century (Fig. 4). The wall churches built up in the 14th century and the necropolises around them are located on heights dominating the area around the settlement heart. The location of the cult monuments at Câmecea, Mehadia, Berzovia and Ilidia confirm this observation. The contemporaneous necropolis of the settlement from the 12th - 13th centuries from Gomea is located at the western limit of the village. Subsequently, during the 14th century, from unknown reasons, the necropolis' location moved towards the summit of the same terrace, probably around a wooden church, as the toponym *Țărcheviște* suggests. Chieftains' or nobles' courts known since the 12th century at Ilidia or since the 14th century at Reșița and Berzovia, were located in the vicinity of a settlement, on heights that were dominating the zone. Taking into consideration the stage of the archaeological investigation of the medieval village in the neighboring zones of the mountainous Banat, we consider that the gathered information about medieval village hearts from Banat offer few significant references to this matter²⁴.

2.

Houses and Medieval Courts

The house represents a defining element of the rural landscape, illustrating the relationship of deep interdependence between man and

²³ *Doc. Val*, p. 221-223.

²⁴ R. Popa, *Țara Hațegului*, p. 203 and following; O. Toporu, *op. cit.*, p. 150-154; D. Minić, *op. cit.*, p. 109-115.



Fig. 1. Geographic map of the south of Banat (according to V. Sencu):
1. Mountains; 2. Depressions; 3. Hills; 4. Plains; 5. Basins; 6. Passes.

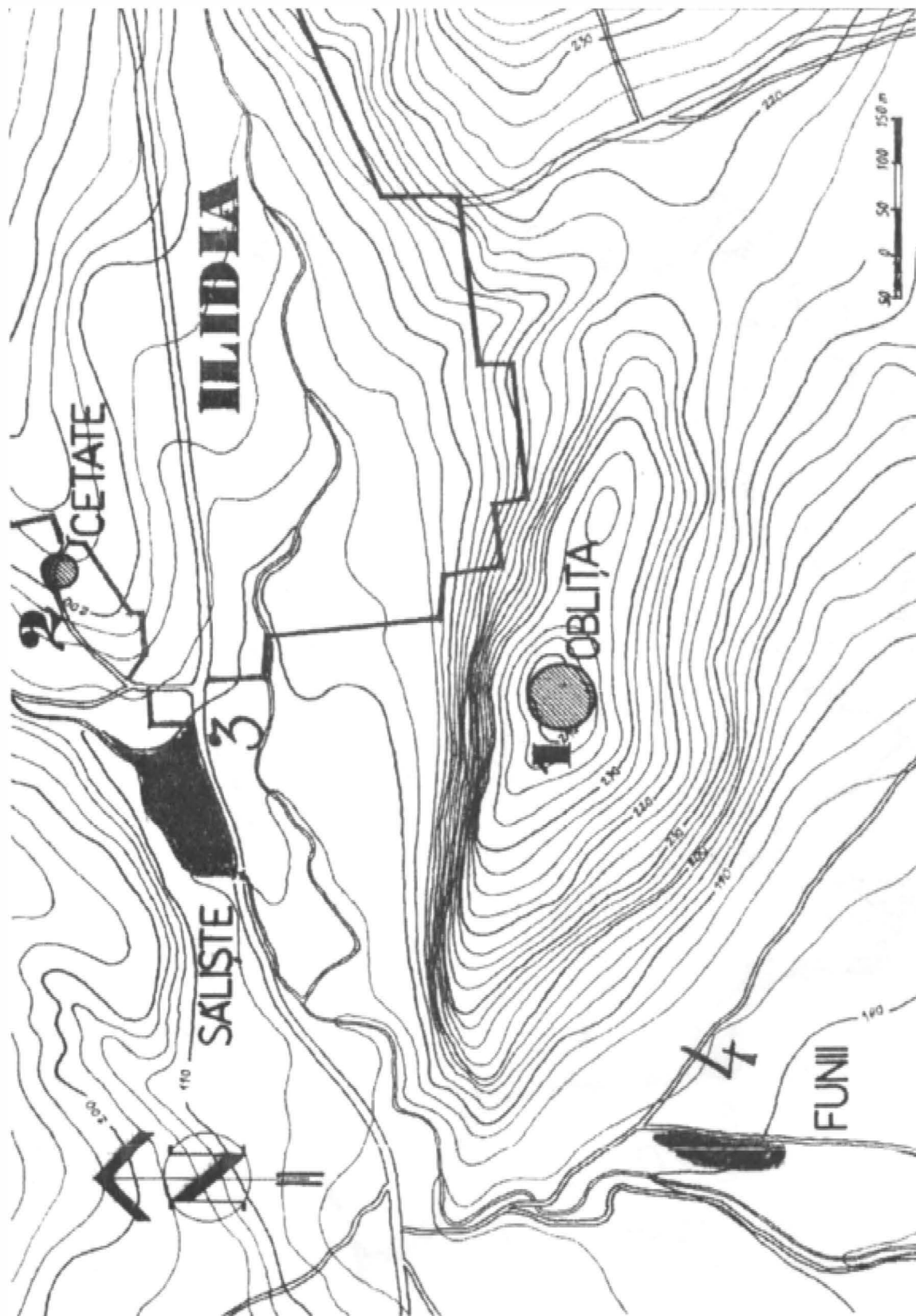


Fig. 2. Ilidia. Location of the medieval habitat:
 1. Medieval residence; 2. Stone wall church and necropolis; 3. Heart of the medieval village (14th century); 4. Dwellings (12th-13th centuries).

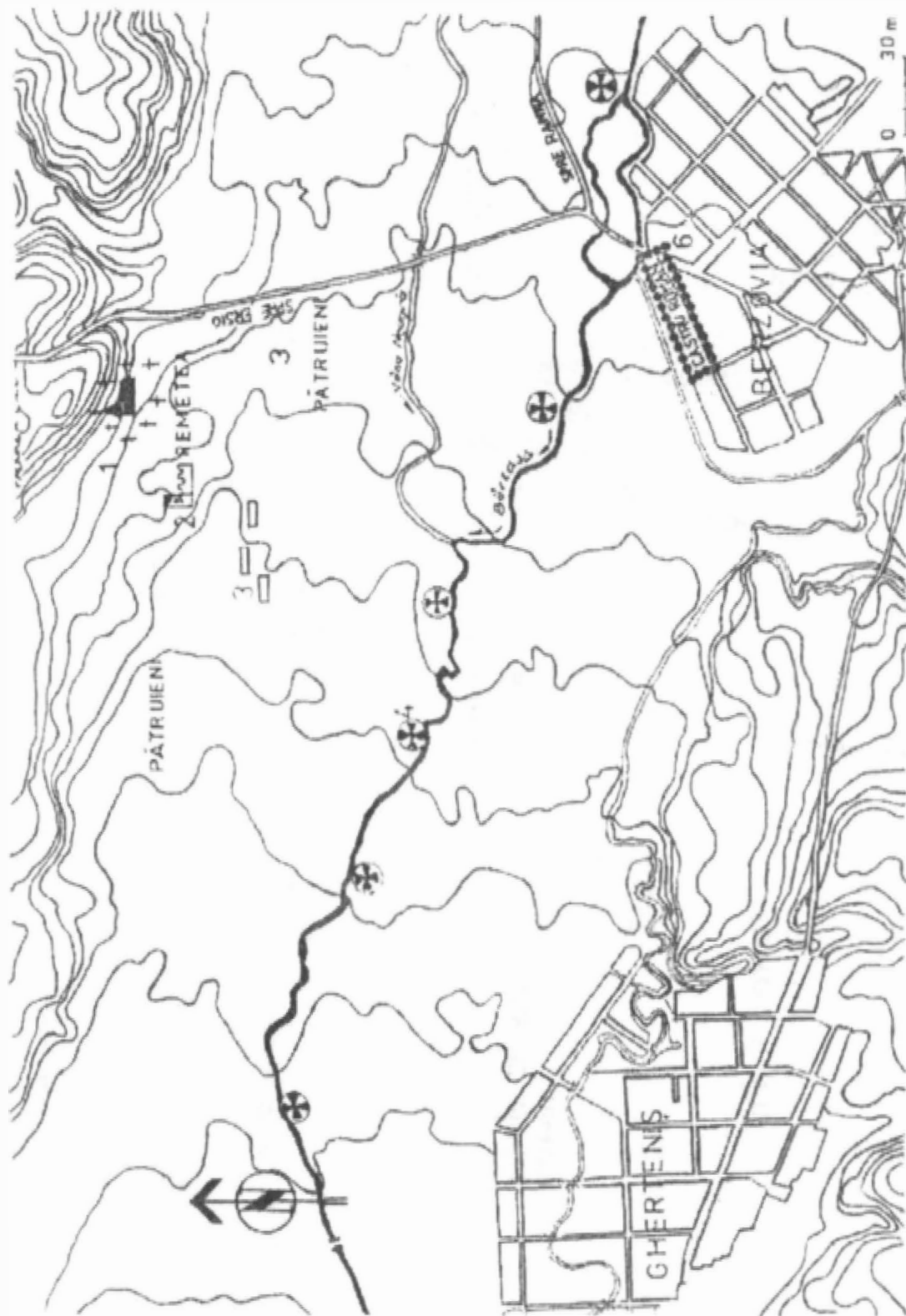


Fig. 4. Berzovia.

1. Location of the deserted settlement Remetea and of the court of the nobles Himfy;
2. The 14th c. church and necropolis;
3. Heart of the village;
4. Mills (14th – 15th c.)

environment at the same time²⁵. It offers shelter and place for preparing food for a family, and together with the other constructions around it forms a household. From this perspective, the rural dwelling represented the economic nucleus of the household. As we have already noticed, tradition played an essential role in the domain of rural architecture. The house was built using the raw materials available in a certain area, in respecting the traditional models²⁶.

Medieval written sources offer extremely poor information that could help us to reconstitute the image of a medieval dwelling from the mountainous zone of Banat²⁷. Undoubtedly, in this case too, archaeology offers an important documentation concerning the medieval house. Some foreign travelers in the 18th century Banat noticed some defining elements of the Romanian house. Accordingly, J.J. Ehrler's information represents an important document as concerns the Romanian rural house from the final period of the Middle Ages²⁸. Taking into account the precedent and extremely slow changes in this domain, which we have already mentioned, Ehrler's testimonies, corroborated to those offered by archaeology and ethnology, form a documentary support for reconstitution of the medieval rural house in Banat. Ethnographic evidence offers suggestions concerning the construction technique of the dwelling, structure and customs connected by this.

Any discussion about medieval house in Banat starts, undoubtedly, from the documentation offered by the medieval village archaeology. The research in the settlements' heart of the 12th-14th centuries from Ilidia, Gomea and Moldova Veche had offered significant references about the dwelling's shape and structure, but also about the household inventory. The dwelling from the end of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th century from Ilidia - *Funii* is located in the close proximity of the Vicinic riverbed. It had a rectangular shape, slowly rounded at corners with sizes of 6/4 m (Fig. 5/3; 6). A 2 by 1.5-m corridor represented the entrance, on the northwestern limit (Fig. 6). A pit-like part of the dwelling was buried into ground at 0.50 m in depth. Postholes had not been found during the exca-

²⁵ H. Jankuhn, *op. cit.*, p. 22 and following; H. Jäger, *ZfAM*, 6, 1978, p. 8-17, V. Spinei, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²⁶ F. Braudel, *Structurile cotidianului*, 2, București, 1984, p. 6-7.

²⁷ The houses are usually mentioned in case of some patrimonial conflicts, devastation and burning. The document on the 21st of April 1362 mentions burning the houses of Zeredahel village, or, by other occasion, in May 1364 there are mentioned the destroyed houses of Suran village, *DRH*, C, XII, p. 69-70, p. 244.

²⁸ J.J. Ehrler, *op. cit.*, p. 49, "the Romanian builds up alone his house. Often it is built up of trodden clay or of wickerwork or of logs set one over another and covered by reed".

ventions, as in the case of the settlements from Gornea and Moldova Veche also. This finding enables us to sustain that the dwelling from Ilidia had walls of beams set on a wooden support. Reconstitution's proposal (Fig. 7) is based on this essential observation for understanding the way of construction. Construction material used to rise the walls was undoubtedly wood, which was plentifully available. A dwelling with a similar plan was researched at Ilidia - Săliște. It had a rectangular plan of 6.25 by 3.25 m (Fig. 5/2), and it had 0.30 m in depth. The entrance was through a short corridor, 1.50 by 1.25 m sized. Small river stones that were found around the dwelling pit suggest that the walls were built on a wooden support. Construction technique of the walls in coronets of horizontal beams, as Ehrler mentions, specific of the wooden Romanian architectures can only be supposed, following the interpretation of some ethnographic relics²⁹. Wooden architecture used as early as the 14th century for the churches in southern Banat undoubtedly influenced the architecture of houses. In the close vicinity of Ilidia, on the Valea estate, a wooden church built on a stone basis was attested in 1378³⁰.

Archaeological researches in the heart of some settlements of the 12th - 13th centuries from Gornea and Moldova Veche point to the same type of dwelling (Fig. 8). The 14 dwellings from Gornea were located on a terrace of the Danube, near the Camenița valley. They had a part dug in ground, 0.40-0.80 m in depth. The shape and sizes of the pits point out different aspects. Accordingly, dwelling no. 1 had the deepest part as a rectangular pit having 2.60/1.80 m, dwelling no. 4 had a rounded pit of 3.75/3 m, and dwelling no. 14 with an oval pit had an oven. A similar situation had been recorded for the dwellings from Moldova Veche – Rât (Fig. 8). The deepened part of dwellings 5, 8 and 9 was oval shaped, while dwelling no. 10 had an irregular outline. The pits had 4/3 m for L8, 3/2 m for L10 and 4/2.5 m for L9. Archaeological excavations from Gornea and Moldova Veche had not revealed traces of postholes, which suggest that their walls were sustained by wooden supports. The proposal for the reconstitution of dwelling no. 9 from Moldova Veche is backed by archaeological data.

The attempt to systematize the archaeological data on the dwelling from Banat during the 12th - 14th centuries points out a few aspects of its planimetry. Typologically, all the dwellings have only one functional nucleus.

²⁹ R. Vuia, *Le village roumain de Transylvanie et du Banat, Le Transylvanie*, II, 1938, p. 776-781; V. Vătășianu, *Studii de artă veche românească și universală*, București, 1987, p. 71; N. Săcară, *Valori ale arhitecturii populare românești*, Timișoara, 1987, p. 55-56.

³⁰ Pesty Fr., *Krassó*, III, p. 147 "*ecclesia partim in lignis et partim in lapidibus constructa*".

During the 14th century, at Ilidia, the dwellings had a part dug into ground. In the central and western European space, during the 12th-13th centuries, the stone dwellings replaced wooden ones, while the buried dwellings disappeared³¹. Rural wooden house with a deepened part had a longer persistency in the Banat space. Statistics of the 18th century proved they were still numerous in the rural world³². Wood as raw construction material had dominated the architecture of the peasant house in the Banat zone during the Middle Age. The space of a dwelling, according to the size of the pit had contained different surfaces. Part of the dwellings of the 12th - 13th centuries from Gomea and Moldova Veche had a surface of 10-12 m², but in the same time, a contemporaneous dwelling from Ilidia - *Funii* had 24 m². Dwellings that had only 6 m² were investigated at Gomea and Moldova Veche. As no of the identified medieval settlements had been exhaustively archaeologically investigated one can not globally appreciate the evolution and the planimetry of the dwelling inside a settlement.

Defining elements in appreciating the functionality of a feature as a dwelling are the heating and cooking installation. In the case of an arranged dwelling, it consists in a fireplace or an oven. The fireplace represents the oldest and a lasting way of heating and cooking³³. The dwelling of the 12th - 13th centuries from Ilidia - *Funii* had a simple open fireplace set on the floor. The same location of the fireplace on the floor can be met in dwelling no. 2 from Moldova Veche and dwelling no. 13 from Gomea (13th century). In dwelling no. 9 from Moldova Veche, the fireplace is located above the floor on an edge of the dwelling's pit (Fig. 8). In this case, as the small pits around the big pit suggest, a small clay wall to protect the walls of the house surrounded it. So, the round fireplace was made in the center of the dwelling or near a wall. Medieval dwellings with an interior fireplace are known in the central-eastern European Slavic world, but also in the Romanian environment³⁴. In the settlement from Gomea, ovens situated both inside and outside the houses were identified and investigated³⁵. Two dwellings from the 12th century had the oven in the edge of the pit. They had a round fireplace with 0.80 m in diameter and respectively L₁₄ of 1.30 m., covered by a semispherical calotte. A group of three baking ov-

³¹ W. Janssen, *op. cit.*, p. 328; P. Donat, *Haus, Hof und Dorf in Mitteleuropa vom. 7 bis 12 Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1980, p. 31-32.

³² N. Săcară, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

³³ I. Vlăduțu, *Etnografia românească*, București, 1973, p. 171-172.

³⁴ K. Horedt, *Morești. Grabungen in einer mittelalterlichen Siedlung in Siebenbürgen*, II, Bonn, 1984, p. 21; O. Topotu, *op. cit.*, p. 153-154; M. Comsa, *Ilfov. File de istorie*, București, 1978, p. 112-115; N. Constantinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 44; L. Skruzny, *Pam Arch*, 54, 2, 1963, p. 234-248.

³⁵ D. Țicu, Gh. Lazarovici, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

ens dug in the hill's slope was investigated on the eastern edge of the medieval village from Gomea. This type of dwellings with an interior-baking oven lasted for a long time. They can be met in a large area from the center and the east of the continent³⁶. As for the dwelling's illumination, we can mention two clay-made lamps from the 13th - 14th centuries found at Ilidia and Gomea. They had an oval, tray-like body, with short flaring walls and a spout. Analogies are to be found in the settlements from the Lower Danube, in the 11th – 13th centuries³⁷. The 14th chancellery documents name the dwellings from the settlements *domus*. The annexes around the dwelling are seldom mentioned in acts and so much the less one can find useful references to reconstitute them³⁸. The Romanian historiography paid much attention to the terminology of the archaeologically investigated medieval dwellings. Taking into consideration that a part of them was dug into ground, they were named hut, semi-hut, semi-buried dwelling or dwelling with natural veranda³⁹. As we have already mentioned, we consider V. Spinei's denomination of surface dwellings with a slightly deep floor as being definite⁴⁰. Medieval village archaeology has among its immediate priorities the enrichment of the documentation concerning the medieval dwelling, shading of its image and its evolution in time⁴¹.

Reconstitution of the internal structure of the medieval village during the 10th-12th centuries raises obstacles. Poor information from the written and archaeological source severely limits the attempt of reconstitution of the rural landscape of the mountainous space of Banat. A very important historical source for the knowledge of the Banat realities at the beginning of the 11th century is *Legenda Sancti Gerardi*. It testifies the existence of

³⁶ O. Toporu, *op. cit.*, p. 153; N. Constantinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 45; M. Comşa, *SCIV*, 10, 1, 1959, p. 83; D.Gh. Teodor, *Teritoriul est-carpatic în veacurile V-XI e.n.*, Iaşi, 1978, Skružny, *op. cit.*, p. 105, 261.

³⁷ M. Comşa, *DinogeŃia*, I, 1967, p. 185 and fig. No. 119/2; S. Baraschi, *Păcuil lui Soare*, II, 1977, p. 66, Pl. IX.

³⁸ *DRH*, C, XII, p. 20, 69-70 the act from April 1362 mentions the burning of some houses in Zeredahel; p. 244 the destroyed houses from the village Suran.

³⁹ I.I. Rusu, *op. cit.*, the terms of *hut* and *fireplace* result from the ancient autochthonous background, the house and its components are from Latin; V. Neamtu, *op. cit.*, p. 64-67 proposes the denomination of *dwelling with natural veranda* for the little deepen dwellings

⁴⁰ V. Spinei, *op. cit.*, p. 103-104 brought arguments for the adoption of the denomination of "*surface dwelling with a slightly deep floor*" in the case of the constructions named huts in the archaeological literature; P. Donat, *op. cit.*, p. 18, 25, 31, 37, 122 for the dwelling from the central Europe.

⁴¹ D. Antonescu, *Ethnos*, 2, 1992, p. 90-92, in his opinion the establishment of the moment when the roof in four waters was adopted constitutes a priority. He relates this fact to the influence of the religious architecture from the 14th century

some estates (*allodiae*) and of some courts (*curiae*) in the space between the Mureș River and the Danube⁴². Identification and archaeological investigation of these rural structures from the 10th-11th centuries is still a desideratum of the future research. Medieval archaeology had offered almost nothing, as the documentation concerning this problem is concerned. The existence and the organization of these courts can be supposed on the basis of the analogies from Transylvania or other areas⁴³.

As early as the 14th century, historical sources offered ample information on the structure of a medieval village from Banat. One can understand that, in this period, the feudal court constituted the defining element of the rural habitat. Chancellery documents from the 14th century mention *the feudal court* using terms as *curia* and *fundus curiae*. The village Șoșdea, from the Bârzava valley, had 24 households in 1369: "*duodecim curiae in linea occidentale eiusdem ville... similiter duodecim curiae in parte occidentale*"⁴⁴. In a disappeared settlement, *Guluez*, from the Caraș plain, a house place had been pledged for a mark and a half in 1355⁴⁵. The chieftains of the Romanian district Sebeș were complaining, in 1369, to the ban Benedict Himfy, as the royal army passing by had completely burnt "all their gardens and yards and other buildings, where there were not dwellings"⁴⁶. A confirmation of this opinion concerning the medieval court can be found in the documents from the second half of the 14th century referring to the domain of the Himfys from the Bârzava and Pogăniș valleys. The act from 1377 - 1378, which confirms the re-dividing of the domain Remetea - Ersig and mentions the court as a reference. Therefore, the court Remetea had come back to Stefan Himfy as his residence⁴⁷. On that occasion, the court of the potter benedict in the lane of the fair Ersig, situated near Pogăniș and the court of the noble Benedict Himfy were registered⁴⁸. In 1389, when the domain Remetea - Ersig was divided, many deserted courts ("*desertas curias*") at Izgar and Ersig in the Pogăniș valley were registered⁴⁹. Courts and court places had been mentioned in chancellery data from the 15th century, as being within the town structure of Caransebeș. Romanian nobles Lado de Bizere and Petru Viteaz de Bizere got a court place in the front of the Franciscan Monastery from

⁴² *Legenda Sancti Gerhardi*, X: "*erant ei pecora infinita, quae omnia habebat pastores suos deputatos, insuper allodia et curias*".

⁴³ R. Popa, N. Chidioșan, A. Lukacs, *RMM-MIA*, 2, 1984, p. 21-34.

⁴⁴ Ortway, *Oklevelek Tm.*, IV, p. 114-115.

⁴⁵ Pesty Fr., *Krassó*, III, p. 29; DRH, C, X, p. 340.

⁴⁶ DRH, D, I, 1977, p. 97-98.

⁴⁷ DRH, C, XIII, 1994, p. 570 "*curia Remethe pro curia sua*".

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 570, "*Benedictus lutificulus cum curia sua*".

⁴⁹ Pesty Fr., *Krassó*, III, p. 188.

Caransebes in 1430⁵⁰. Written documents mention, in the same acceptance of the 14th - 15th centuries, the peasant court, the *knez'* court and nobility court. The boundaries' delimitation of the domain Remetea - Ersig from the second half of the 14th century is significant. The peasant household is sometimes mentioned in documents by using the term *mansio*. Under this acceptance, the act from 1357 delimits a plot of land with 50 households in the Secăș valley⁵¹.

Information from the written documents of the 14th century are extremely poor as concerns the structure of a rural settlement, the number of peasant households, the household inventory, the placement and the structure of a feudal landowner court. The above mentioned act from 1357 was mentioning "lands, hay fields, woods and all the other usage, satisfying the needs of 50 households⁵²". A resembling image is given by a 1369 document referring to the Șoșdea village in the Bărzava valley and the land surfaces needed by such a dwelling⁵³.

The medieval court, as the few written sources prove, stands out as a distinct economic unity and, in the same time, as a defining element of the structure of the medieval village from Banat. It generally contains houses, other buildings, and shelters for animals, gardens and other constructions necessary to a household. This acceptance in which the feudal court is considered a basis economic unity of the medieval state, is also met in the central European historiography⁵⁴. Medieval archaeology, with all the evident accumulations referring to the village from Banat during the 12th - 14th centuries, is still far from offering the documentation and knowledge needed for the reconstitution of the peasant or *knez* courts. One can use the results of certain archaeological investigations inside some *knez* or nobility residences from Reșița and Ilidia. Archaeological investigations into the settlements from Ilidia, Gornea and Moldova Veche offer certain references concerning the dwelling and the peasant household in the 12th - 14th centuries. The large dwellings from Ilidia - *Săliște* (the 14th century) and Ilidia - *Funii* (12th-13th centuries), around which there were identified less ample arrangements with the same household inventory seem to suggest the image of a household. This working hypothesis can be accepted under the reserve of some future confirmations. We have archaeological data about the structure of some workshops of the 12th century from Gornea, but one can not discuss about the court of some handicraftsmen mentioned in the documents of the 14th century. The reconstitution of the im-

⁵⁰ Pesty Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 23.

⁵¹ *DRH*, C, XI, 1981, p. 201.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 201.

⁵³ *DRH*, C, XIII, 1994, p. 629.

⁵⁴ P. Donat, *op. cit.*, 93, p. 101-105; W. Janssen, *op. cit.*, p. 326, 331.

age of a medieval peasant court on the basis of archaeological information, as we know it for the central European space, remains a desideratum of the future research. Only the complete archaeological investigations of the heart of the medieval village can appreciate the plan, the shape, and the structure of a medieval court and can be established connections with the geographical, economic and ethnic factor.

3. Knezial and Nobiliary Residences

The identification of the feudal residences of the 10th - 12th centuries, as supposed on the basis of the written sources is still a priority of the future research. An architectural monument of the 12th century identified at Ilidia constitutes an important proof of the organization of a feudal court in the Romanian environment in the southern Banat. The dwelling tower was raised up in the second half of the 12th century⁵⁵. Subsequently, at Ilidia - *Oblița*, starting from the 12th century a feudal court was built, whose court-chapel with a surrounding necropolis and many stone and brick buildings were investigated. The investigations from Ilidia have offered an important documentation about a feudal court (Fig. 9). It occupies a surface of 13,500 m² and is situated on the summit of a hill that dominates the zone. The medieval settlement from Ilidia was mentioned in the act on the 30 of March 1223, beside the fortress Cuvin and other ownership among the possessions of the ex-empress of Byzantium, Margaret, Isac II Angelos' wife (1185-1195)⁵⁶. Byzantium controlled the Danube territories, including the zone of Ilidia and, in 1182, the Hungarian king Bella III conquered them. The feudal residence investigated at Ilidia – *Oblița*, should be considered an implantation of the Hungarian royalty in the Romanian space in the south of Banat. In 1334, Ilidia was mentioned with a Catholic parish⁵⁷.

A feudal Romanian residence belonging to the so-called *Tzerovan* lords (knez), was identified at Reșița. The headland-shaped hill, on which the residence had been placed, dominates the Bârzava valley at its confluence with the brook Predova. It had a surface of about 5.500 m² where a dwelling tower and a hall-church with necropolis around it were placed too. No other elements of fortification had been identified. The plan of the dwelling tower and its sizes are known only from the registrations of some older investigations⁵⁸. Recent archaeological investigations offered data about the hall-church and the surrounding necropolis. It was

⁵⁵ D. Țeicu, *Arheologia satului medieval din Banat*, Reșița, 1996, p. 80.

⁵⁶ A. Tăutu, *Antemurale*, 3, Roma, p. 52-65.

⁵⁷ DIR, C, Veacul XIV, III, p. 234.

⁵⁸ D. Țeicu, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

emphasized that the necropolis had a functioning phase anterior to the stonewalled monument even from the first half of the 14th century⁵⁹. The court-church, built following a simple archaic plan, had a 5 by 6 m nave and a 3 by m altar. The feudal residence from Reșița - Moroasa had been raised by the lords from Terova, according to the results of the archaeological investigations. The 15th century chancellery documents mention villages and possessions owned by the Terova landlords on the upper course of the Bârzava River. The archaeological investigation from Reșița-Moroasa, corroborated with information of written sources, had pointed out a feudal Romanian residence from the 14th century (Fig. 10).

The village and the feudal court from Remetea have been archaeologically identified on the northern bank of the Bârzava, at Berzovia. Archaeological investigation pointed out the foundations of a hall-church, mentioned in a 1414 document as a parish church of the village Remetea⁶⁰. The remains of the feudal court Remetea, documentary attested starting with the second half of the 14th century had been located at approx. 300-m southwest of the parish-church. It occupied a surface of 3,400 m² on a hillock artificially arranged in the Bârzava meadow.

We know, due of archaeological excavations, only the plan of a wooden building with the support buried into ground that had belonged to the structure of the court from Remetea. Archaeological inventory places the construction in the second half of the 14th century⁶¹. Identification and investigation of the Romanian families' residence Bizere, Mîtnic, Cerna, Deș de Timișel are to be considered a priority of the medieval archaeology from Banat.

Archaeological and historical documentation we actually possess does not allow an ampler discussion based on conclusive elements. One can ascertain for the moment that, in the 14th century, the Romanian *knez* built up courts with wall-churches the same as those raised up in Transylvania or in the east of the Carpathians in the same period⁶². The dwelling-tower from Ilidia from the 12th century constitutes an extremely important testimony referring to the arrangement of the feudal courts in the Romanian environment in the south of Banat. Subsequent archaeological investigations will enrich and will shadow the image concerning the feudal residences from Banat in the 12th-13th centuries.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

⁶¹ Investigations occasioned by the workings of land improvements, led by D. Teicu

⁶² R. Popa, N. Chidloșan, A. Lukács, *op. cit.*, 21-34, A. Bătrâna, *SCIVA*, 38, 4, 1985, p. 302.

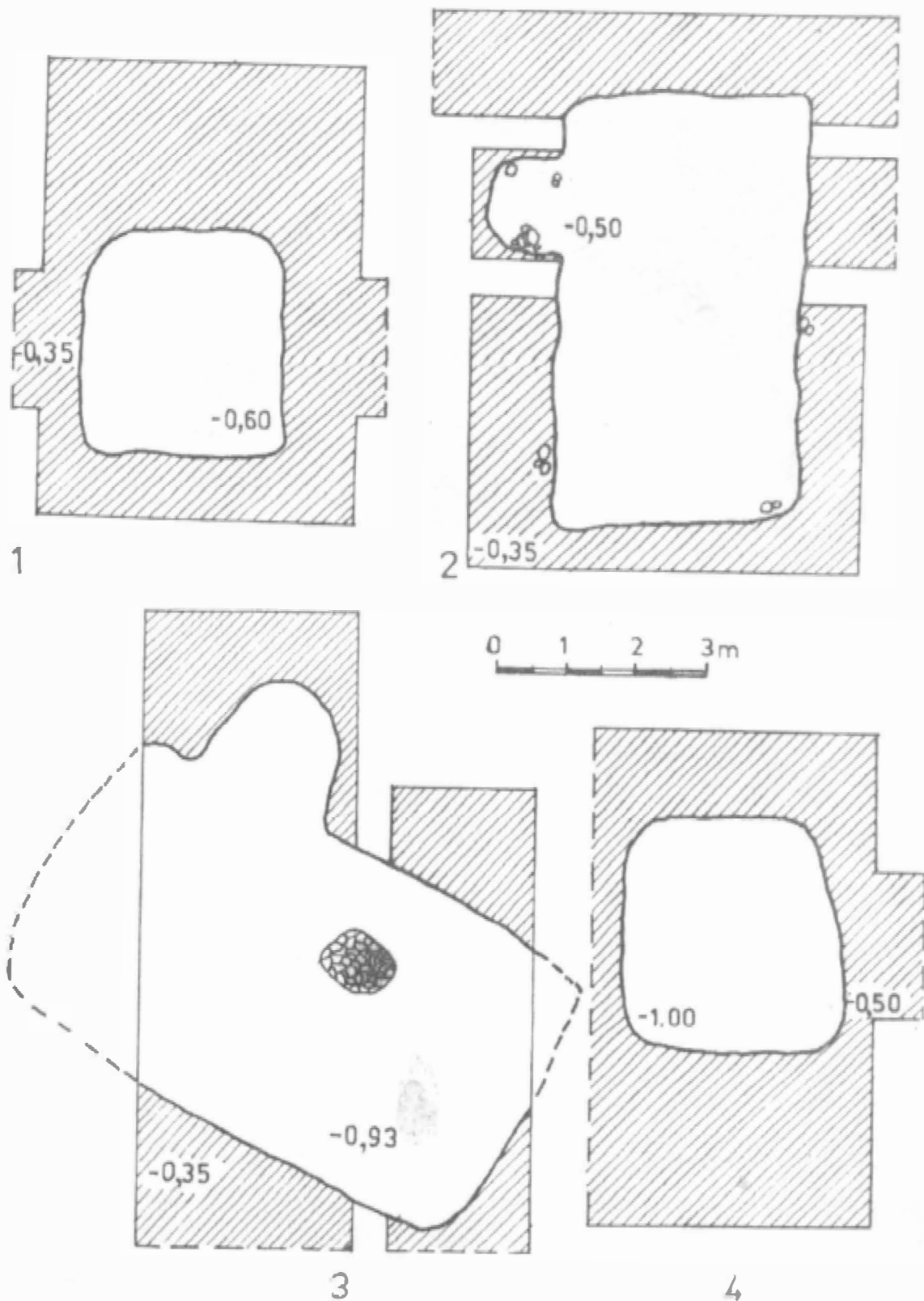


Fig. 5. Ilidia. Plan of medieval dwellings (12th-14th centuries)

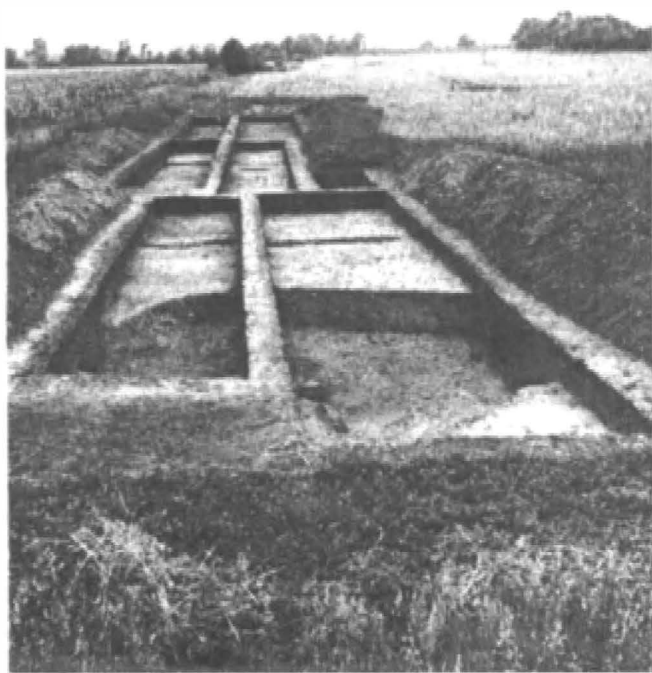
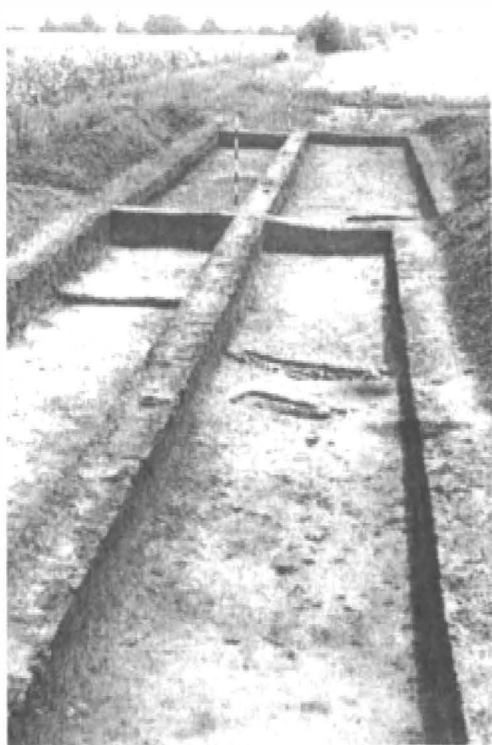
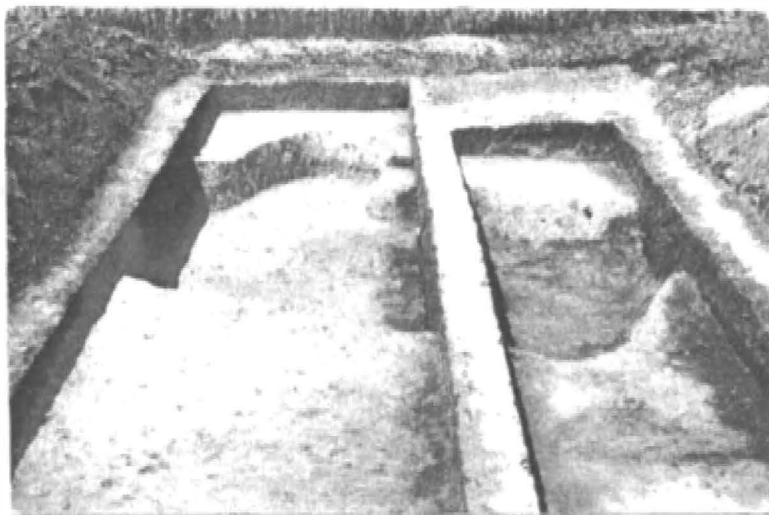


Fig. 6. Ilidia. Dwelling from the 12th-13th centuries.

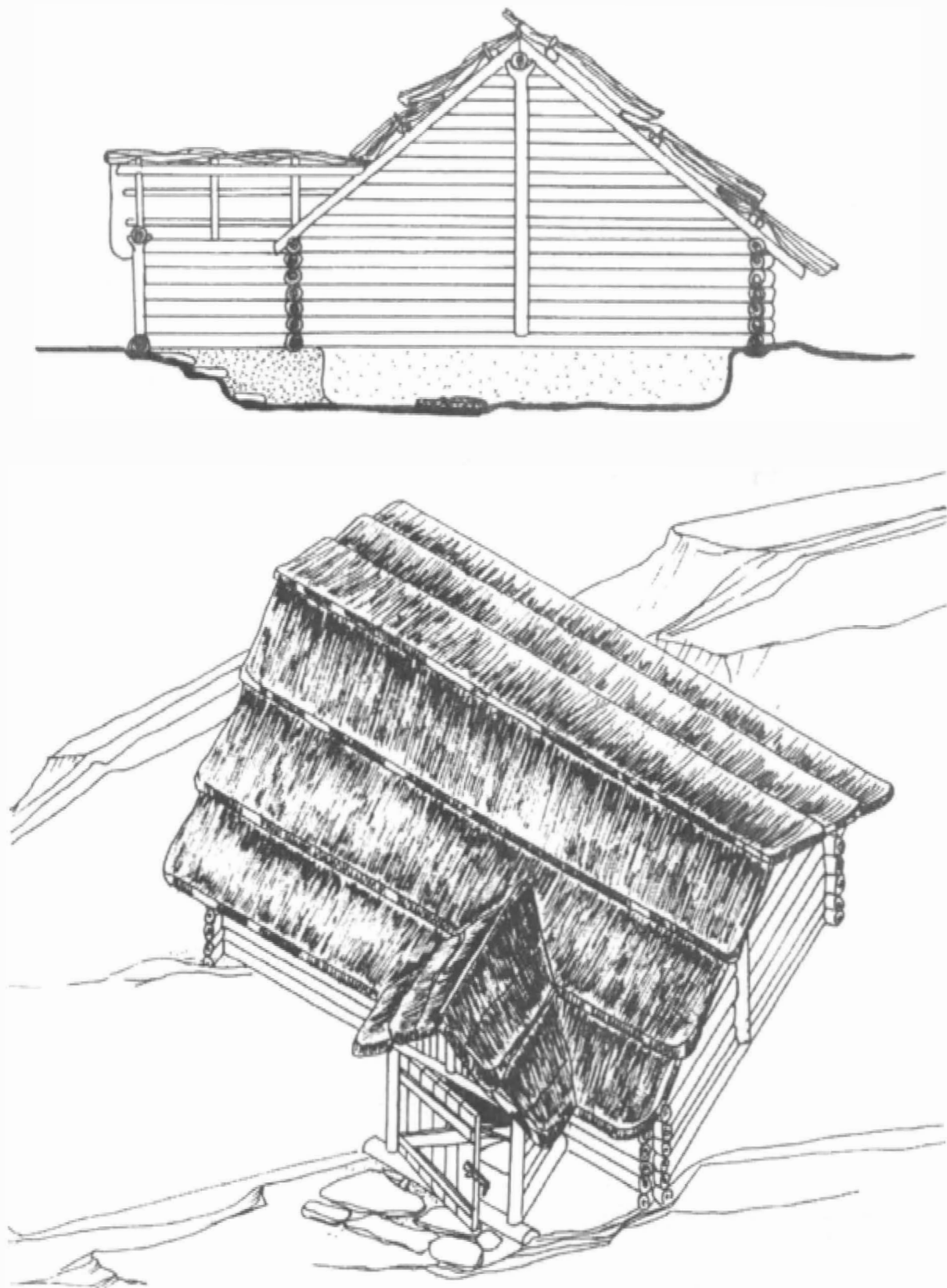
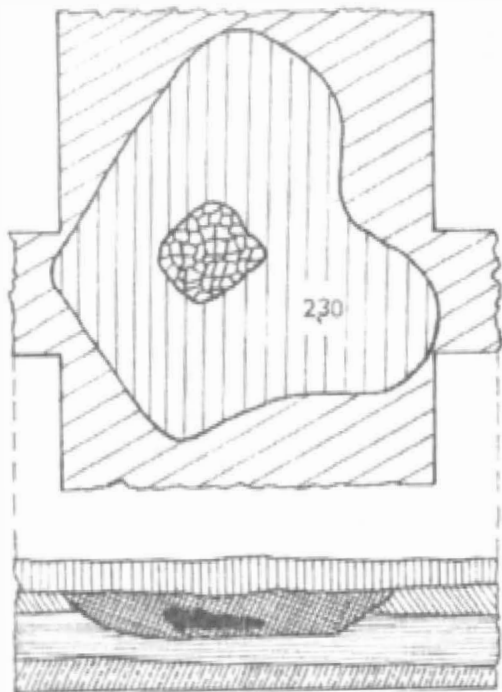
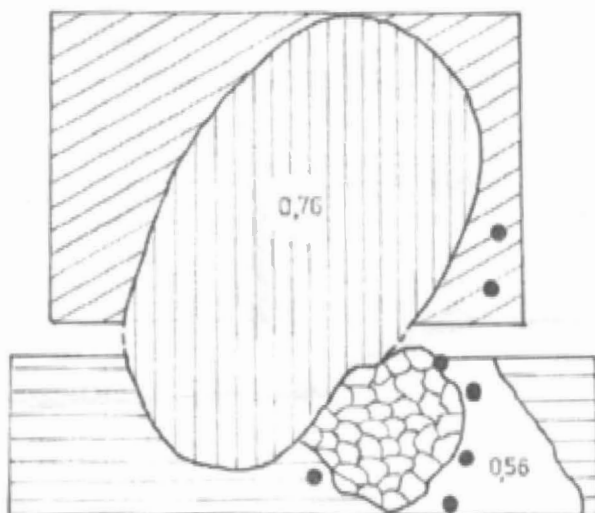


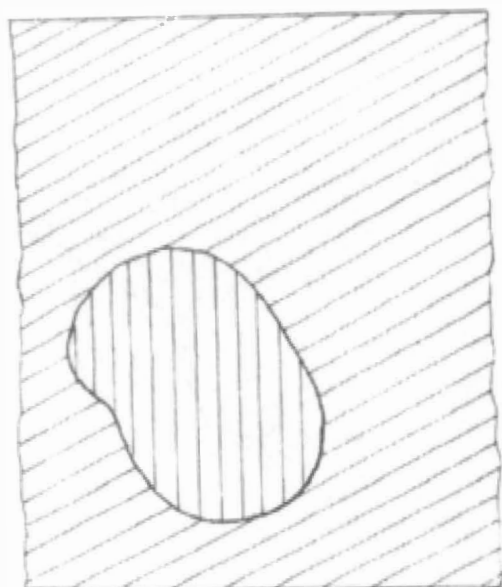
Fig. 7. Ilidia; proposal of reconstitution of the dwelling dated to the 12th-13th centuries.



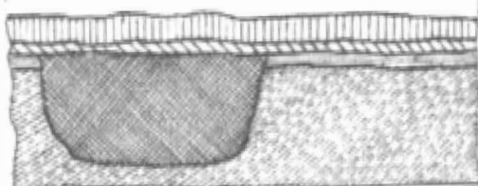
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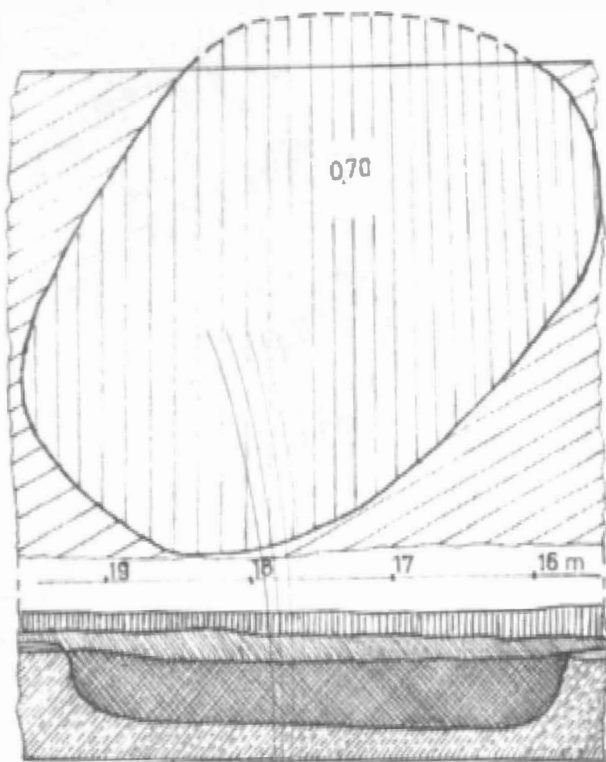
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Fig. 8. Moldova Veche. Plan of medieval dwellings from the 12th-13th centuries.



Fig. 9. Ilidia - Oblița. Location of the feudal residences.

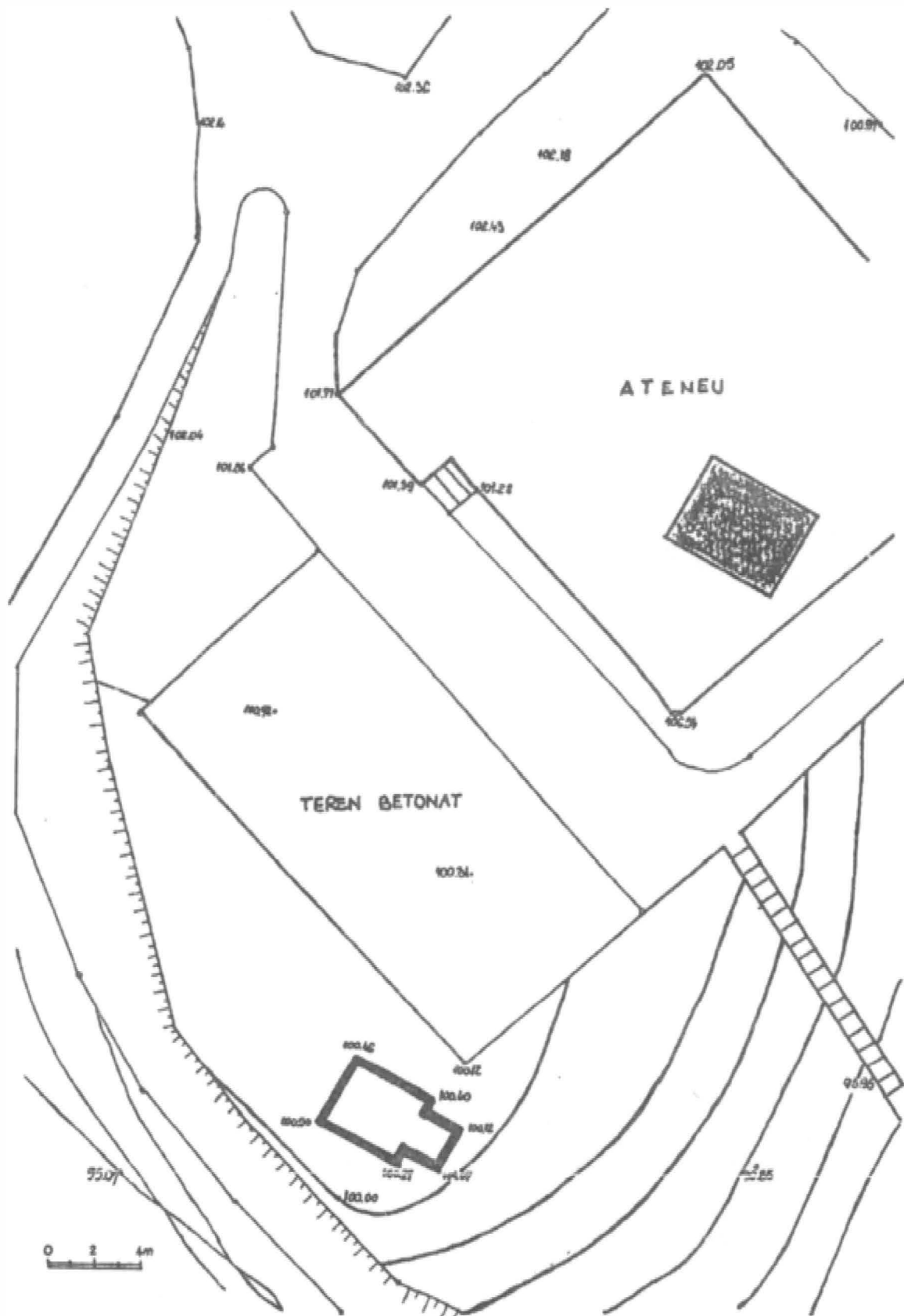


Fig. 10. Reșița – Moroasa. Location of the knezial residence.

Investigation of the medieval village supposes the knowledge of the necropolis contemporaneous to the settlement. Its investigation offer conclusive data concerning the ethnic - demographic aspect of the settlement, the funerary rite and, not finally, it points out a series of testimonies of the material culture. The necropolis or necropolises of a rural medieval settlement reflect the essential stages of its existence and evolution.

Accidental discoveries at the end of the 19th century called attention to this aspect of the medieval civilization from Banat, given their funerary inventory⁶³. Ampler archaeological investigations in the necropolises from the space of the southern Banat can be registered only in the last three decades. The discovery of 30 graves and necropolises from the 10th-15th centuries could be mapped. Taking into consideration the proportion of the geographic space where the necropolises had been located, as well as their chronological sequence, we consider that the archaeological documentation referring to the medieval necropolises still offer partial information. That is why historical conclusions can be done on their basis⁶⁴. Extremely few identified necropolises had benefited by complete systematic archaeological investigations. In this sense, it is pointed out the exhaustive archaeological investigation of the necropolis from Șopotu Vechi from the depression Almăj⁶⁵. The necropolises from Cuptoare, from the depression Mehadica and those from Gomea from Clisura Dunării also benefited ample investigations. Necropolises of the 13th - 14th centuries, around the wall church from Ilidia, Reșița, Cârnecea and Mehadia were investigated in great measure. The investigations in the medieval necropolises from the southern Banat, as we have already suggested, were unequal, part of them remaining at the stage of archaeological excavation. As we have shown other time, only the investigations from Reșița and Gomea benefited a complete scientific publication. In many cases, for many important discoveries, as that one from Cuptoare, the archaeological documentation is still unpublished and inaccessible.

Consequent to a point of view adopted, we are going to present the 12th – 13th century funerary discoveries, constituted besides some cult monuments and, subsequently, the necropolises of the 13th - 14th centuries around certain churches.

⁶³ F. Milleker, *Delm*, V, 1909, p. 274.

⁶⁴ D. Țeicu, *Banatica*, 12/1, 1993, p. 230 and following.

⁶⁵ *Idem*, *Crisia*, 21, 1991, p. 307-310.

1. **Biserica Albă (*Bela Crkva*)**. Excavations led by M. Garašanin had pointed out, on the lower Nera course, a group of 23 graves, undoubtedly were belonging to a bigger necropolis⁶⁶. The funerary inventory from M₃ and M₄, consisting in globular earrings, and from M₁₄ and M₁₆ - granulated earrings, offer elements of dating of the necropolis. Jewels had been assigned to the 10th-11th centuries, but in our opinion, they belong rather to the 12th century⁶⁷.

2. **Caransebeș – Măhala**

A group of six graves has been investigated among the remains of a Roman farm, situated on the left bank of the river Sebeș. A glass bracelet, found in one of the graves proves that the inhumations here can be assigned to the 12th century⁶⁸.

3. **Cuptoare – Sfogea**

The village Cuptoare is situated in the Timis-Cerna passage, in the southeastern extremity of the depression Mehadica. The necropolis from Cuptoare is located on the summit of the hill Sfogea, at the confluence of the brooks Luncavița and Mehadica (Fig. 12). During the archaeological excavations, carried out for more than a decade, 347 graves have been registered. One can use now only an extremely summary report of excavation that points out part of the funerary inventory⁶⁹. Byzantine, Hungarian, Serbian and Western coins, besides jewelry, offer significant poles concerning the chronology of the necropolis. The series of the Byzantine coins starts with pieces from the emperor Isac II Angelos (1185-1195), registered in M₁₃₂ and M₃₂₉, continuing with the discoveries from M₃₂₉, a coin from Alexios III Angelos (1195-1203) and Ioan III Vatatzes (1222-1254) at M₂₃₀. A western coin issued by Bernard II (1202-1270) was found in the funerary inventory at M₃₀₈. The piece from M₁₂₇ was a coin issued by the Serbian king Stefan IV Dragutin (1276-1316).

The Hungarian coin used as funerary offering at Cuptoare is known through issues from the king Bella IV (1235-1270). Coins from the king Stefan V (1270-1272) are found through the discoveries from M₂₆₆, M₃₁₈. For the 14th century, the funerary inventories contain pieces from Charles Robert (1308-1340), Queen Mary (1328-1387) and Sigismund de Luxemburg (1387-1437).

⁶⁶ M. Garašanin, D. Garašanin, *ZbNM*, 1, 1958, p. 33-36.

⁶⁷ *Jewelry on the territory of Serbia*, Belgrad, 1982, p. 44.

⁶⁸ E. Iaroslavschi, *Banatica*, 3, 1975, p. 355-361.

⁶⁹ I. Uzum, *Banatica*, 9, 1987, p. 281-315.

The graves from the end of the 12th century and the next century had had a representative funerary inventory with silver jewelry as for example temple earrings, tiaras, and bracelets. The necropolis from Cuptoare proves the existence of a Romanian settlement whose beginnings can be discerned at the end of the 12th century and whose existence can be followed to its attestation in the medieval written documents. The settlement and the necropolis are situated in a homogeneous Romanian zone, as the medieval district Mehadia had been one.

4. Cuvin

The 1968 archaeological investigations in the Danube valley had recorded graves with temple-rings having "S"-shaped endings⁷⁰.

5. Deta

A hazardous discovery at the end of the 19th century, registered by F. Milleker, records the presence of some Hungarian graves from the 10th-11th century⁷¹.

6. Drencova

An archaeological test trench in the Danube Iron Gates executed by V. Boroneanț located graves of the 12th - 13th centuries⁷².

7. Gornea – Căunița de Sus

In the southern extremity of the Danube terrace from Căunița de Sus a necropolis from the 12th - 13th centuries has been partially investigated. 65 inhumation graves were investigated on a surface of approx. 300 m². Even if they had a systematic character, archaeological investigations did not offer a complete documentation concerning the extent and the chronology of the necropolis⁷³. (Fig. 11)

The burials were made in the close vicinity of the medieval village heart, in the 12th-13th centuries (Fig. 3). Almost a quarter of the graves had coins and jewelry in their funerary inventory. The coins put as funerary offering came from Hungarian issues of King Géza II (1142-1162) and from the Byzantine emperor Isac II Angelos (1185-1195). The earrings with astragals, discovered at M₅ and M₄₄ had been made of silver, decorated with granules belt-like. Such jewels are known in the Romanian environment of the south of Banat in necropolises of the 12th-13th centuries from Cuptoare and Șopotu Vechi. The inventory of the grave 59 had recorded a pair of biconical earrings decorated with granules and silver thread worked in filigree. Typologically they belong to a series of jewels specific to the 12th-13th centuries, in the western Lower Danube zone. The arguments offered

⁷⁰ L. Kovacs, *AAH*, 43, 1991, p. 419.

⁷¹ F. Milleker, *op. cit.*, p. 274; C. Balint, *Südungarn im X Jahrhundert*, Budapesta, 1991, p. 218, LIIIb

⁷² Information from V. Boroneanț.

⁷³ D. Teicu, Gh. Lazarovici, *op. cit.*, p. 80 and following.

by the partial investigation of the necropolis plead for the assigning of the necropolis the 12th century and the first half of the 13th century⁷⁴. The necropolis from Gornea, together with the rural settlement to which it belonged, offers a significant image of the medieval habitat in this zone.

8. Ildia - Funii

In the meadow of the brook Vicinic, at the southwest of the hill Oblița, a 11th - 12th centuries necropolis had been identified. Only 17 inhumation graves had been investigated. The grave nos. 8 and 17 had temple earrings with "S"-shaped like ending and coins in their inventory⁷⁵.

9. Mehadia – Zidină

Archaeological investigations in the Roman fort pointed out a group of graves from the Arpadian period in the zone between the Bela Reca and the brook Valea Bolvașniței⁷⁶.

10. Moldova Veche – Rât

In the close vicinity of the medieval village (11th-13th centuries), on the bank of the Danube, feudal graves had been recorded⁷⁷. The necropolis had been destroyed by modern arrangements and accordingly it remained uninvestigated.

11. Pescari

The site had been placed at the eastern extremity of the depression Moldova Veche, in a river gorge. On the Danube bank, in the proximity of the medieval fortress on the hill Culă, a grave with a glass bracelet was identified⁷⁸. It belongs, undoubtedly, to a cemetery from the 12th - 13th centuries.

12. Pojejena

On a low terrace of the Danube, located in the west of the village, traces of a medieval necropolis had been found. A silver ring, made of twisted thread, can be assigned to the 11th century, offering a reference for the dating the necropolis⁷⁹.

13. Șopotu Vechi – Mârviță

The locality is situated in the southern edge of the Almăj depression. A necropolis consisting of 47 graves was exhaustively investigated between 1988-1991. It was placed on a hillock in the meadow of the brook Șopot. 24 out of the 47 graves had a funerary inventory represented by coins and adornments (Fig. 15). Byzantine coins from the emperors Manuel the Comnen (1145-1180) and Isaac II Angelos (1185-1195) were found in M₃

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 90-91.

⁷⁵ Investigations D. Țeicu

⁷⁶ M. Macrea, *Studii. Revistă de știință și filosofie*, II, 1, 1949, p. 1239-140.

⁷⁷ D. Țeicu, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 239.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 240-241.

and M₇, while a Hungarian coin issued by the king Coloman (1095-1116) was found in M₂₃. In M₂₅ and M₄₀ coins from king Bella II (1172-1196) had been found. The grave no. 29 had had as funerary offering, put in the left palm, a Western coin from the beginning of the 13th century. Biconical silver earrings, decorated with thread worked in filigree and with granules find analogies in the necropolises of the Danubian area in the 12th-13th centuries. The necropolis from Șopotu Vechi - *Mârviță* had belonged to a small community from the end of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th century⁸⁰.

14. Svinîța

A group of 12 graves have been investigated in this zone of the Danube valley. The funerary inventories date the graves to the 12th - 13th centuries⁸¹.

15. Vrșac

Older discoveries, pointed out by F. Milleker, indicate the presence of some Hungarian graves from the 10th - 11th centuries in this zone⁸².

16. Voilovița

The settlement is located in the Danube passage, not far from Pančevo in the Yugoslav Banat. Chancellery documents certify that in 1230 the settlement Voila belonged to the domain of the royal fortress Caraș⁸³. Archaeological excavations have identified a necropolis dated to the 12th - 13th centuries, where 23 graves have been investigated. Grave goods consist in bracelets, rings and earrings⁸⁴.

A. Necropolises from the 14th-15th Centuries

During the 14th century, other necropolises have emerged, belonging to certain rural settlements that had had not cult monuments. Accordingly, such were recorded at Ciclova Română, Gornea, Pojejena, Vrani, Vrâniuț.

17. Ciclova Română – Morminți

The hill *Morminți* dominate the valley of the brook Vraniul Mare that constitutes the boundary with the village Ilidia. 25 graves of a bigger cemetery situated on the hillock have been investigated. The investigated graves have been attributed to the 14th century⁸⁵.

18. Gornea – Târcheviște

Part of a cemetery from the 14th century has been excavated on the

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁸¹ V. Boroneanț, *Drobeta*, 6, p. 111-117.

⁸² N. Stanojev, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁸³ Milleker, *op. cit.*, p. 290; N. Stanojev, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁸⁴ N. Stanojev, *op. cit.*, p. 38-42

⁸⁵ I. Uzum, D. Teicu, *Banatica*, 6, 1981, p. 213.

summit of the terrace of the Danube at Țârcheviște. A number of 55 graves have been investigated. They had a modest inventory; only one coin from Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387-1437) was found on a surface of 100 m². The toponym Țârcheviște suggests the existence of a church in the zone that has not been located in the archaeological test trench⁸⁶. The necropolis from Țârcheviște is located on the same terrace of the Danube with that one from Căunița de Sus from the 12th-13th centuries, in the proximity of the medieval village to whose existence it is linked. It reflects, at the same time, modifications in the structure of the medieval rural landscape from Gomea.

19. Pojejena – Nucet

On the Danube' bank, in an area called *Nucet*, close to the medieval fortress from Pojejena, a medieval necropolis has been tested. Given the lack of grave goods and the partial character of the investigation, the archaeological framing of the graves has been done on the basis of some ceramic discoveries from the culture layer⁸⁷.

20. Petnic

The locality is situated in the Craina county that links the depression Almăj to the passage Timiș-Cerna. On the hill *Morminți* a group of graves had been detected that seem to belong to a necropolis of the 15th-16th centuries⁸⁸.

21. Vărădia

A settlement in the meadow of the Caraș River is documentary attested in the 14th century within the boundaries of the fortress *Ersumlow*. There were found medieval jewelry (the 14th-15th centuries) in a cemetery within the village boundaries⁸⁹.

22. Vrani

An archaeological test trench in the meadow of the river Caraș pointed out medieval graves (the 14th-15th centuries)⁹⁰.

23. Vrăniuț

On the bank of the brook Ciclova medieval graves and coins have been detected. The necropolis is located in the proximity of a settlement of the 12th-14th centuries⁹¹.

⁸⁶ I. Uzum, *Banatica*, 3, 975, p. 131 and following.

⁸⁷ Idem, *Tibiscus*, 3, 1974, p. 161-162.

⁸⁸ D. Țeicu, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 241.

⁹⁰ Investigation and information from M. Gumă.

⁹¹ D. Țeicu, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

B. Necropolises around certain Churches from the 13th-14th Centuries

24. Berzovia – Pătruieni

The parish church of the disappeared village Remetea was located on the northern bank of the Bârzava, in the vicinity of the road to Ersig. Twelve graves were dug around it. The necropolis had an inhumation phase anterior to the construction of the church. The foundation ditch of the eastern wall of the sanctuary had crossed one of the graves⁹². The investigated graves had not funerary inventory.

25. Cârnecea – The church hill

Around the church-hall, 55 graves from a rural necropolis have been investigated. The funerary inventory of the graves was modest and it contained only six coins and few small fragments of jewelry. A phase of inhumations anterior to the construction of the wall-church was stratigraphically documented. Archaeological investigations could not establish the starting moment of the inhumations and not even the duration of the necropolis around the church. The funerary inventory represented a mark for the existence of the church and the cemetery between the 14th-15th centuries⁹³.

26. Ilidia – Cetate

The construction of the hall-church at Ilidia - Cetate started at the middle of the 13th century, as the archaeological investigation suggests. A necropolis with two phases of inhumation was identified around it. Ninety-two of its graves were investigated⁹⁴. It was appreciated that the first phase of the necropolis had functioned starting from the second half of the 12th century. In the present stage of investigation, the necropolis from Ilidia - Cetate constitutes the earliest proof for a village necropolis situated around of a wall-church in the 13th century.

27. Mehadia – Ulici

On the bank of the river Belareca, the heart of a village from the 12th-13th centuries and the necropolis around a hall-church from the same zone has been archaeologically investigated. A number of 16 graves have been registered. They were placed around the monument within a much larger cemetery. A seal ring with the image of a bicephalous vulture suggests that in the 14th century there were already made burials⁹⁵. Taking into

⁹² Idem, *Banatica*, 10, 1990, p. 267-268

⁹³ Idem, *Arheologia satului medieval în Banat*, Reșița, 1996, p. 56-59.

⁹⁴ Șt. Matei, I. Uzum, *Acta MN.* 9, 1972, p. 557.

⁹⁵ D. Țicu, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

account the restrictive character of the investigation there no appreciation can be done concerning the proportion and the chronology of the necropolis. For the moment, we can not establish connections between the village heart and the cult monument from its vicinity.

28. Sat Bătrân – *The church hill*

The settlement is located at the basis of the river Timiș, at almost 3-km east of Slatina Timiș. Following surface collection, the existence of a church and of a surrounding necropolis has been registered⁹⁶. In absence of some archaeological investigations, the discovery from Sat Bătrân has a limited informational character.

29. Ilidia – *Oblița*

The round church inside the feudal court was a chapel around which there was a cemetery. 37 graves that were around or inside the church have been investigated. The funerary inventory, as much as we know it, contain coins and jewels specific to the 14th-15th centuries⁹⁷. The necropolis from Ilidia-*Oblița* had functioned as a nobiliary necropolis into a feudal court.

30. Reșița – *Moroasa*

Into the feudal residence of the Țerova lords from Reșița, the hall-church had the same function of court chapel. Recent archaeological investigations have marked in plan the placement around the monument of 33 graves from a surely larger necropolis. Stratigraphical observations pointed out that the necropolis had had an inhumation phase previous to the building of the wall – church⁹⁸. One could not establish the starting point of the burials from Reșița – *Moroasa*. The grave goods suggest burials had been practiced as early as the first half of the 14th century. The necropolis from Reșița – *Moroasa*, similar to the one from Ilidia-*Oblița*, was constituted as a knezial necropolis around the feudal court (Fig. 14).

Analysis of the Funerary Inventory

1. *Tiaras*

The investigation of the necropolis from Cuptoare-Sfogea, as well as those from Șopotu Vechi - *Mârviță* have pointed out fragments of tiaras, as part of the grave goods.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 245.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 237. The necropolis around the round church has not been scientifically published yet. The references in different studies were concerning its dating and including being contradictory.

⁹⁸ D. Țicu, *op.cit.*, p. 240.

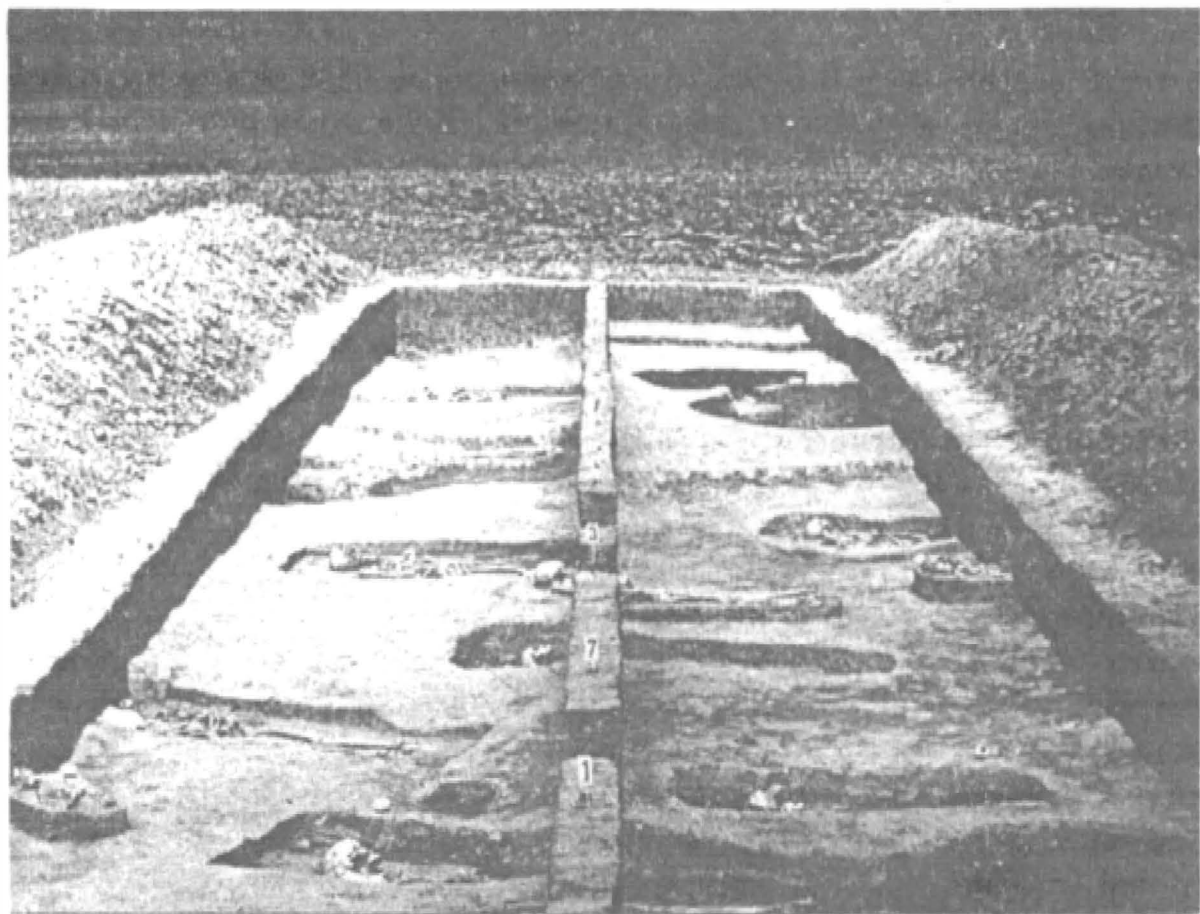


Fig. 11. Gornea – *Căunița de Sus*. General view of the necropolis
(12th-13th centuries)

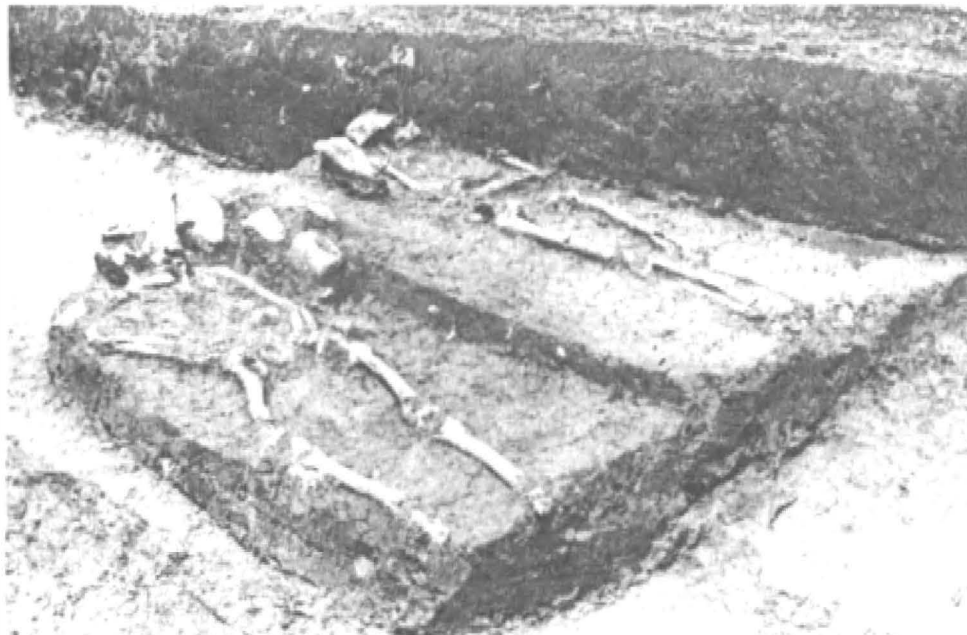


Fig. 12. Cuptoare – Sfogeia. 12th-13th century's graves.



Fig. 13. Gornea – Căunița de Sus. 12th-13th century's graves.

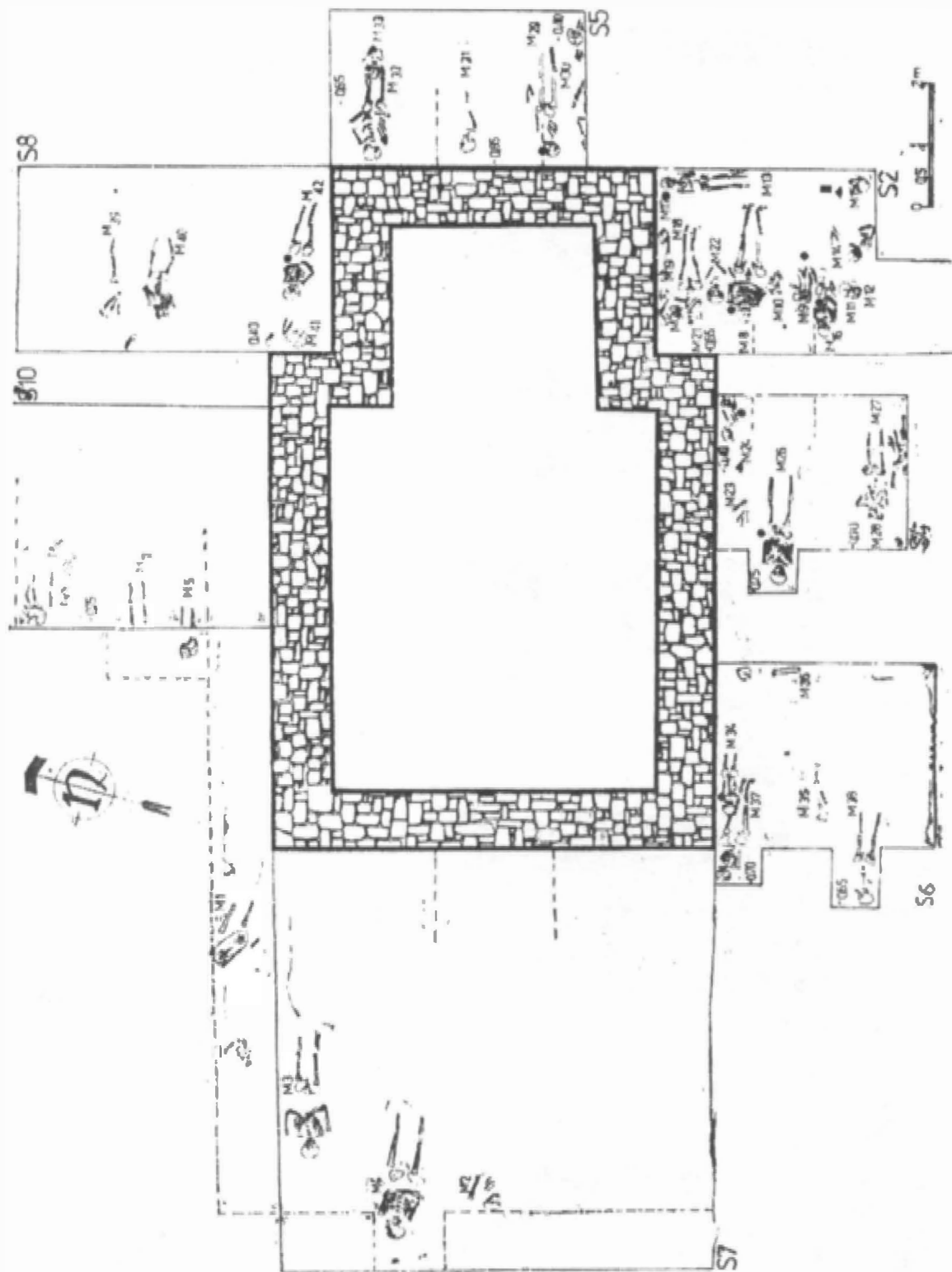


Fig. 14. Reșița - Moroasa. Location of the graves around the court chapel.

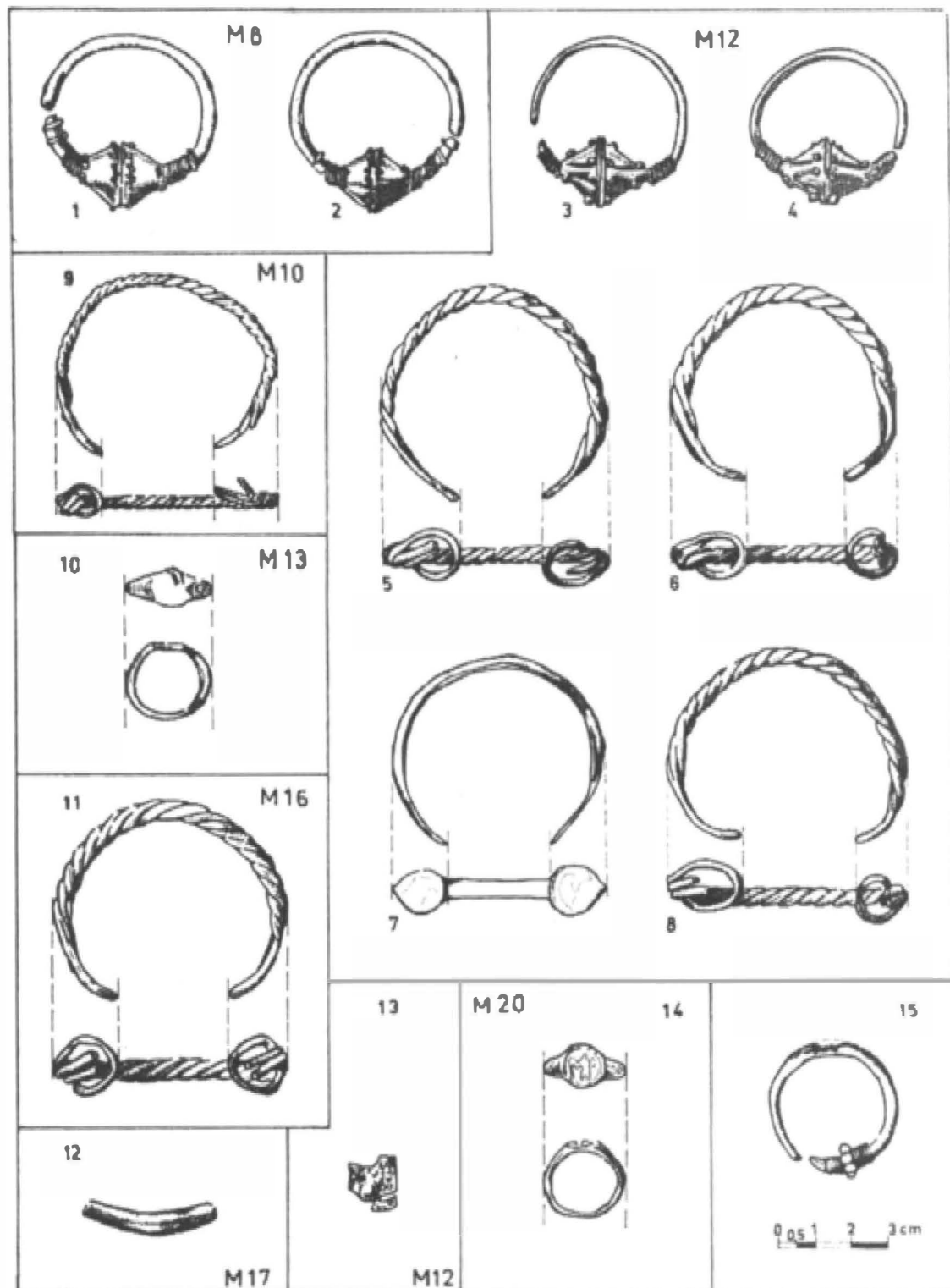


Fig. 15. Șopotu Vechi - Mărvilă. Funerary inventory of the necropolis from the 12th -13th centuries.

In M₂ from the necropolis from Șopotu Vechi, a fragment from a rectangular silver plate decorated through pressing was found. More numerous in the necropolis from Cuptoare - Șfogeia, such jewels were found in M₂₁₄, M₂₂₅, M₂₃₂ and M₃₂₇. Only in M₂₁₄, 16 plates of a tiara (Fig. 16/3-5) were found around the skull. They are made of a thin silver sheet, rectangularly shaped and they had approx. 2.15/1.50 cm. The plates had been decorated through pressing with two semispherical calottes in the central zone and small impressions around. In the comers, they have four orifices for their sewing on fabrics or on leather.

The discovery from Șopotu Vechi can be dated, on the basis of the funerary inventory of the necropolis, in the second half of the 12th century. Similar jewels from Cuptoare can be attributed to the 12th-13th centuries.

The objects from Șopotu Vechi and Cuptoare have close analogies in the discoveries from Hajdučka Vodenica⁹⁹, Brestovik¹⁰⁰, Glamija - Ljubičevac¹⁰¹. In the northern Serbia, similar jewels had been mentioned at Vinča¹⁰², in the deposit from Kustunić and at Bârza Palanka. But we have to mention that near Vršac, at Kapelin Breg¹⁰³, it was found a mould for tiaras plates that had an identical shape and decoration as those ones from Cuptoare and Șopotu Vechi, but also from the discoveries in the South of the Danube.

This discovery proves that their production center had been a local one, close by Vršac, somewhere between the plain zone and the mountainous zone of Banat.

2. Earrings

a) Temple earrings with "S"-shaped endings

They are known from the discoveries from Ilidia - Cetate and Funii, Gornea- Căunișă, Șopotu Vechi - Mărvilă and Cuptoare - Șfogeia. The earring from Cuptoare - Șfogeia is made of silver and has 2 cm in diameter (Fig. 17).

Temple earrings with "S"-shaped endings were considered for a long time among the typical elements that characterize the so-called Bjelo-Brdo

⁹⁹ St. Ercegović-Pavlović, *Les sites d'habitations et les necropoles de Boljetin et de Hajdučka Vodenica*, Belgrad, 1986, p. 72, fig. 14/2, 3

¹⁰⁰ M. Čorović-Ljubinković, *Zbor NM*, 1, 1958, p. 332-333, Fig. 2.

¹⁰¹ M. Parović, *Djerdapske Sveske*, II, Beograd, 1984, p. 143, Fig. 131/5.

¹⁰² *Jewelry on the territory of Serbia*, p. 59, cat. 297.

¹⁰³ D. Minić, *Starinar*, 21, 1972, p. 166.

culture. Different and divergent opinions in historiography¹⁰⁴ were expressed concerning their chronology, typology and ethnical assignment. They served for a long time as a main argument in the ethnical assignment of the necropolises of such discoveries. As the archaeological investigations have proved, this jewelry has been found in different ethnic environments, in Hungarian, Slavic and Romanian cemeteries¹⁰⁵. As for the discoveries in the necropolises from Banat, we consider that the earrings from Cuptoare and Gomea can be dated in the 12th century.

b) Earrings with astragals

This type of jewelry was made of a round rod, which was bent like a circle with 1.5 – 3 cm in diameter. Granules like small beads shaped as a belt were placed towards one of the tiara's ending. That is why the denomination met in the archaeological literature, that of earrings with astragals (Fig. 18).

This type of earrings had been found in the necropolis from Cuptoare-Sfocea in M₁₉, M₄₁, M₉₂, M₂₀₉, M₃₀₀, from Gomea - Căunișă in M₆ and M₄₄ and from Șopotu Vechi - Mărvișă. The earrings from Cuptoare were dated on the basis of I. Uzum's analogies between the 11th-13th centuries. On the basis of the same analogies, the jewels from Gomea were circumscribed to the 10th-12th centuries¹⁰⁶.

This type of jewels is known in the necropolises and discoveries from a large area, across Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Serbia¹⁰⁷. From the typological assembly of Dalmatia and of the Balkans, there are the samples characteristic to the Danubian area. The jewelry from Gomea, Șopotu Vechi and Cuptoare have analogies with the discoveries from Tmjane, Vinča, Kostol and Brestovik¹⁰⁸. The presence of the earrings with astragals, among which there are even luxurious silver samples, on the both sides of the Danube valley proves the existence of some common workshops that had produced and provided such jewelry in the zone.

¹⁰⁴ Z. Vana, *Slov. Arch.*, II, 1954, p. 69, 99; A. Kralovansky, *Stu.Sl.*, V, 1-2, 1959, p. 330-346; J. Giesler, *op. cit.*, p. 104-108, with special references to their typology and chronology; K. Horedt, *Moresti*, II, Bonn, 1984, p. 62-63 with the spreading of this type of jewelry in Transylvania.

¹⁰⁵ R. Popa, *AMM MIA*, 47, 1978, 1, p. 9-32, with the discovery from the necropolis around the Romanian church from Streisângeorgiu; G. Marianović-Vujović, *op. cit.*, p. 809.

¹⁰⁶ I. Uzum, *op. cit.*, p. 296; Idem, *Banatica*, 6, 1981, p. 168.

¹⁰⁷ See D. Jelovina for the territory of Dalmatia, *SHP*, III, 8-9, 1963, p. 101-102; see N. Miletić for Bosnia and Herzegovina, *GZM-A*, 18, p. 169; Șopotu Vechi, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 84-86, Fig. 176 and Pl. 24-25-28; M. Ćorović-Ljubinković, *op. cit.*, p. 33, Fig. 3, pieces characteristic to the 12th century that can be found also in the zone Timoc-Niš and Dunăre-Sava.

A variant of the same type of earrings is that one with two rows of granules placed as two belts (Fig. 18/11-13). Such earrings had been found in the necropolis from Cuptoare – Sfogeia, in M₁₅₀. The closest analogies are to be found at Tmjanje, Prahovo and Korbovo, in the Danube Valley. The earrings with astragals from Gomea and Şopotu Vechi are to be dated in the 12th century, maybe even to the second half of the 12th century. Similar discoveries from the south of the Danube are considered specific to the 12th century¹⁰⁹. Accordingly, the earrings from Cuptoare can not belong to the period between the 10th–11th centuries, they had to be dated in the 12th century, maybe even in the first half of the 13th century.

c) Globular earrings

These jewels were made of a round rod that has fixed on it a spherical globe (Fig. 19), decorated with small prominence, placed in rows. The earring is decorated with thread worked in filigree on its rod. On the territory of Banat, we know this type of earrings from the necropolis from Cuptoare, which have been vaguely dated in the 10th-13th centuries¹¹⁰. The globular earrings from Cuptoare have analogies in the similar discoveries from Vinča¹¹¹, Prahovo and Tmjanje¹¹², being considered jewels specific to the 12th century¹¹³.

d) Biconical earrings

A round rod, usually made of silver, passes through the earring, which resembles two cones put end to end. The two cones were made of small circles worked in filigree thread. Such a sample is known from the necropolis from Şopotu Vechi in M₂₇. It has close analogies in the necropolises from Tmjanje, Vinča and Brestovik. Some of them are specific to the 12th century and the beginning of the next century.

Another category is represented by the biconical earrings worked in a thin silver leaf. Their body is decorated at the cones' peaks and on the median zone with granule belts. Such jewelry is known from the necropolis from Şopotu Vechi - Mărvilă, in M₈. Other time, the granule belts are linked one to the other through a decoration of filigree thread. The rod of the earring is decorated in the same way. Both the earrings from Şopotu Vechi and those from Cuptoare, discovered in M₁₇, are worked in this way. Identical

¹⁰⁹ G. Marianović-Vujović, *op. cit.*, p. 84, Fig. 177, Pl. 15, 22.

¹¹⁰ I. Uzum, *op. cit.*, 299.

¹¹¹ *Jewelry...*, p. 50-59, cat. 207, dated in the 11th-12th centuries.

¹¹² G. Marianović-Vujović, *op. cit.*, p. 80-81, Fig. 168, Pl. 16, 19, 21, where they were found with bracelets.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 162.

Jewelry is known in the Danubian necropolises in the 12th-13th centuries¹¹⁴.

e) Tokay type earrings

Temple earrings of type Tokay were discovered in the necropolises in the south of Banat at Cuptoare, Reșița - Ogășele and in the hoard from Macoviște. They are worked in a silver rod on which three unequal bodies had been set. Two of them have spherical globe shapes, decorated with small circles worked in filigree thread. Two cone frustums, unified, decorated with granules and filigree thread form the third body (Fig. 20).

The earring from Reșița - Moroasa, from the knezial necropolis, was dated in the 14th century, possibly at the beginning of the century¹¹⁵. The earring from Cuptoare has analogies in the discoveries from Kladovo, Vršac¹¹⁶ and, to a certain measure, in the deposit from Prahovo¹¹⁷. Taking into account the above-mentioned analogies, we consider the earring from Cuptoare as belonging to the 13th century.

From the moment of the publishing of the hoard until now, there have appeared different opinions as concerns the chronology and the typological evolution of the earrings of the Tokay type. Four decades ago, M. Čorović followed the spreading of these jewels on the Danubian territories and he put in a catalogue all the discoveries known at that time¹¹⁸. Analyzing their spreading in the eastern and central European space, part of the discoveries is concentrated lengthways the Danube Basin. The discoveries are rare, but not absent in the Pannonian region. The flourishing period and of maximum diffusion of this type of earrings belong to the 13th century. They are also to be met in discoveries dated to the next century; as for the 12th century, the discoveries are extremely rare¹¹⁹. Those who have studied this jewel tried to explain its origin and to limit the territory from where this fashion started out. It was suggested their origin starting from the Russian Kiev or Bulgaria¹²⁰. Their spreading was owed to the commerce and to their relationship to Byzantium. The presence of this jewelry also in the Romanian feudal environment from Banat, but also in other regions, indicates that this was not specific to the Slavic world, as M. Čorović-Ljubinković¹²¹ tried to convince us.

¹¹⁴ M. Čorović-Ljubinković, *Rad. VM*, 3, 1954, p. 83, Fig. 3

¹¹⁵ D. Teicu, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹¹⁶ M. Čorović-Ljubinković, *op. cit.*, p. 82, Fig. 2.

¹¹⁷ M. Janković, *Zbor NM*, 9-10, 1979, p. 271-276.

¹¹⁸ M. Čorović-Ljubinković, *op. cit.*, p. 81-93.

¹¹⁹ Z. Kadar, *Slavica*, 1, 1961, p. 200-201; and the more recent discussion at J. Giesler, *op. cit.*, p. 20-21 and note 57; M. Janković, *op. cit.*, p. 277

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 277. Z. Kadar, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

¹²¹ M. Čorović-Ljubinković, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

A variant of this type of earrings is made up of three unequal beads strung on a round twisted rod. The central body of the earring seems to be biconical, but it is decorated with sharpened prominence. The other two beads are spherical and they are worked in small circles of filigree thread. The rod is also decorated with filigree thread. Such pieces have been found in M₁₈₉ from Cuptoare. Similar finds are to be mentioned at Voinești¹²², known as of Kumanic type, Păcuiul lui Soare¹²³ and Branicevo¹²⁴. Such earrings are especially associated with the 13th century.

3. Beads

This type of adornment was found in the necropolis from Cuptoare and Gomea - Căunița. In the necropolis from Cuptoare they were found in M₂₁₈ and M₃₂₈. They were made of clay and glass. The necklace from M₂₁₈ had spherical and cylindrical beads. They were red, black, green and yellow (Fig. 46). In M₃₂₈ there were found about 30 beads. Most of them had been worked in burnt clay and painted. Only a few of them had been made of greenish glass. The custom of these jewels is met in the Danubian cemeteries from Maticane, Batjancă, Vinča, Brestovik and Trnjane¹²⁵. It is very probable that few of these discoveries, especially those ones of colored glass, proceed from the zone of some south Danube workshops.

4. Torque-shaped bracelets

This type of jewelry is frequent both in the necropolis from Cuptoare and in those from Șopotu Vechi and Comea - Căunița (Fig. 21). They had been worked from four copper wires that had been twisted and end in locks at both endings. The small sizes of some samples prove that children had frequently worn them too.

Torque bracelets are known from hazardous discoveries from Izvoarele, Mehedinți district, as well as from Ferigile and Orlea¹²⁶. They were considered as belonging to the 10th-13th centuries on the basis of the analogies to the discoveries from the Balkans. In Transylvania, this sort of jewelry is known, for the moment, only at Vârșand¹²⁷. Archaeological excavations from Dobrogea have pointed out this type of bracelets at Isaccea, in Dinogetia¹²⁸. This simple jewelry circulated in the southeast of

¹²² D. Gh. Teodor, *op. cit.*, p. 255, Fig. 7/6.

¹²³ P. Diaconu, S. Baraschi, *Păcuiul lui Soare*, II, p. 125.

¹²⁴ M. Popović, V. Ivanisević, *Starinar*, 39, 1988, p. 154, Fig. 24.

¹²⁵ G. Marianović-Vujović, *op. cit.*, p. 122, Fig. 117.

¹²⁶ O. Toporu, *Romanitatea târzie și străromânii în Dacia-traiană sud-carpatică*, p. 178, Pl. 17/7.

¹²⁷ D. Popescu, *MCA*, 2, 1956, p. 132.

¹²⁸ I. Banea, *Dinogetia*, 1976, p. 292 and Fig. 172/8.

Europe and in the Pannonian Plain. The discoveries from the Pannonian Plain are only a few and they are mentioned for the moment in two localities¹²⁹.

Plaited bracelets became a real custom on the northern zone of Serbia. Numerous discoveries are known in the Danube valley at Brza Palanka, Ribnica, in the zone of Timoc and in the Mlava valley¹³⁰. In the necropolis from Trnjane, 62 moulding bracelets were found from the funerary inventory. The period of maximum flourishing and spreading of these jewels is included in the 12th century. However, they are also met in the next century. It has to be mentioned that in the necropolises from Macedonia, especially that one at Demir Kapija, such bracelets are dated even in the 9th-10th centuries, and the discoveries from Marcovi Kuli near Prilep are dated in the 10th-12th centuries¹³¹. In the vicinity of Banat, in the south of the Danube, the most frequent discoveries are attributed to the 10th-12th centuries. We consider that the valleys of the Timoc, the Danube and the Morava represented a space where such jewelry was highly in fashion during the 12th-13th centuries, from where they spread north of the Danube. Some of this jewelry, given their simplicity, had probably been made in the southern zone of Banat.

5. Glass bracelets

Glass bracelets are known owed to the discoveries from Cuptoare - Sfogeia, Caransebeş - Măhala and Şopotu Vechi - Mărvilă. The criteria used to present the typology of the bracelets took into consideration the shape of the bar in section and its aspect¹³². Most of the jewelry from Cuptoare, Caransebeş and Şopotu Vechi had been worked in a circular glass bar in section. We also distinguish ellipsoidal or semicircular bracelets. Taking into account the aspect of the bracelet body, we distinguish the following two types: a) bracelets with smooth body, b) bracelets with ornaments in relief. The bracelets from Şopotu Vechi, Caransebeş and from Cuptoare had been made of dark blue glass or of very dark green (Fig. 22).

Monochrome bracelets from the north of Banat have

¹²⁹ M. Szell, *FoIArch.*, 3-4, 1941, p. 241. Gy. Fülöp, B. Jungbort, *Alba Regia*, 20, 1983, p. 133-134, Fig. 3.

¹³⁰ M. Popović, V. Ivanisević, *op. cit.*, p. 163, Pl. 34. Discoveries from Branicevo. For older discoveries, see D. Teicu, *Acta MN*, 18, 1981, 496-497; O.S. Milović, *Viminacium*, 12, Pojarevac, 2001, p. 212-214

¹³¹ B. Babić, *Srednovekovno kulturno bogatstvo na SR Makedonija*, Prilep, 1974, p. 42; Fig. 78 and 79, for the discoveries from Marcovi Kuli at p. 44, Fig. 93.

¹³² P. Diaconu, D. Vâlceanu, *Păcuiul lui Soare*, 1, Bucureşti, 1972, p. 150; E. Comşa, *Dinogeia*, p. 302.

correspondences in the discoveries from the Danube valley, the Mlava valley to Macedonia¹³³. Chronologically the most numerous discoveries belong to the 12th century. The jewelry from Lešie, Ribnica, Mačvanska-Mitrovica was found in graves besides coins from the 12th century¹³⁴. Glass bracelets are certainly found in necropolises even from the 11th century.

The problem of the medieval glass workshops in the Balkans and in the Byzantine world has constituted a preoccupation of the archaeological investigation. Glass workshops from the 8th-10th centuries from Serbia and Bulgaria have been archaeologically investigated¹³⁵. The investigations from Corinth proved that a glass workshop had functioned there until the middle of the 12th century¹³⁶. The archaeological research could not prove the existence of such workshops in the areas south of the Danube, where the Byzantine presence has been effective. A modern research, like the one done for other European spaces could bring clearer chronological explanations and, in the same time, it could establish the local centers of production.

6. Rings

a) The rings from the 12th-13th centuries from Cuptoare, Șopotu Vechi and Gornea can be classified into three typological groups (Fig. 23).

- Rings worked in a bar, both the link and the body of the ring. Geometrical motifs, monograms or human representations are engraved on the *chaton* as those from Șopotu Vechi.

- Silver rings whose *chaton* is decorated with silver granules. The link of the ring is welded on its body and it is made of a thin bar. This type of ring is met at Ilidia - Cetate and Cuptoare.

- Ornamental rings with semiprecious stones. This type is met only at Cuptoare-Sfogeia. One of the samples is decorated also with astragals around the setting on the *chaton*. The closest analogies are in the necropolis from Niš dated in the 12th-13th centuries¹³⁷ and from Trnjane¹³⁸.

b) The investigations from the necropolises in the southern Banat led to the constitution of a ring collection from the 14th-15th centuries. The

¹³³ D. Minić, *Srednoveko staklo na Balkanu (V-XV veku)*, Beograd, 1975, p. 71-78, for the appearance and spreading of the bracelets in Yugoslavia: idem, *Sirmium*, 11, 1980, p. 56; B. Babić, *op. cit.*, p. 50, for the bracelets from Macedonia.

¹³⁴ D. Minić, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

¹³⁵ M. Čorović-Ljubinković, *Staklo na Balkanu...*, p. 64.

¹³⁶ G.I.R. Davidson, *AJA*, 44, 1940, p. 297.

¹³⁷ *Jewelry...*, p. 55, cat. 234; Vujović, *op. cit.*, p. 122, Fig. 117.

¹³⁸ G. Marianović-Vujović, *op. cit.*, p. 68, Fig. 187.

necropolises around the churches from Reșița and Ildia - *Oblia* offered two unitary ensembles of seal rings from the 14th-15th centuries. The rings are made of silver, both the link and the *chaton*. Their decoration consists in floral and geometrical elements, simple or double cross. The initial meaning of the symbol that the engraved image had represented was lost so that it is difficult to be explained now. One can notice the sample from Ildia - *Oblia* that has engraved the image of a fantastic animal in a shield. In Vienna there is a similar sample discovered a long time before at Vărădia¹³⁹. Similar models from the 14th-15th centuries are known in the neighboring spaces from this zone of Europe.

Observations Concerning the Funerary Rite

Regressive reconstitution of the customs, of the orders connected by inhumation proves to be a very difficult preoccupation taking into account the lacunal character of the medieval sources. Archaeological observations, connected by this problem, must be filtered and completed with information from narrative sources of the 18th century or those ones offered by the ethnological sources.

We consider that the findings linked to the popular ceremony of inhumation for a later period, as Doru Radosav defined them keep being actually during the Romanian Middle Age, too¹⁴⁰. Defining elements of the inhumation ceremony would be simplicity and, in the same time, the perpetuation of some archaic practices connected to the everlasting sentiment of the religious experience.

It was remarked the presence of the coin in the graves investigated in the necropolises from the south of Banat. In the necropolis from Șopotu Vechi, coins were found in different positions in six graves. The same in eight graves at Reșița - *Moroasa*. Solid observations concerning the way of putting coin at inhumation were made at Șopotu Vechi and Reșița-Moroasa. The coin had been put in the deceased's mouth, as in the case of M₂₃ from Șopotu Vechi, where the body had a coin issued by the king Coloman. At Reșița, in M₃₄, there was also a coin from the king Ludovic I. The coin was also put on the deceased chest, as it was found at Șopotu Vechi in M₇ and M₄₀, or at Reșița in M₂₄ and M₄₂. Other times it was put on the abdomen as at Reșița in M₂₆. At Șopotu Vechi, in M₂₉, the coin was in

¹³⁹ R. Florescu, I. Miclea, *Tezaure transilvane la Kunsthistorisches Museums din Viena*, București, 1979, cat. 234.

¹⁴⁰ D. Radosav, *Sentimentul religios la români*, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, p. 166; E. Braniște, *ST*, 18, 5-6, 1996, p. 255-260 with a discussion about the ritual from the orthodox theological point of view; S. Papacostea, *Geneza statului în evul mediu românesc*, p. 212 and the following, about the image of the orthodox church and of the ritual practises in the Franciscan works.

the dead's palm. Other times, the coins had been put near the head as they were found at Cuptoare in M_{216, 230} and M₂₆₀.

Archaeologists who investigated this matter considered that putting a coin in the grave as a funerary offering (*Totenobolus*)¹⁴¹. During the early medieval period (the 10th-12th centuries), this inhumation custom is met on large areas from the Balkan Peninsula, Carpathians -Danube region to Central Europe. Thus, in Hungary, the customs are documented in graves with coins from Stefan I even from the first half of the 11th century. A similar situation was in Moravia where this custom had been already current in the second half of the 12th century¹⁴². In the Slavic world, the custom had penetrated with the Christians. Nevertheless, its roots are stronger and they are connected with older pagan rites as concern inhumation. Christianity had absorbed and dissolved these funerary practices replacing them with the coin put in the grave. Cemeteries from Moravia, Bohemia, Poland and Hungary prove that this custom had become very frequent in the second half of the 11th century. Following regressively this custom of the coins in the graves, it can be illustrated through the Merovingian cemeteries from the 5th-7th centuries, taken over by the Germanic populations, by the Avars etc. later¹⁴³.

G. Marianović-Vujović, in a study dedicated to the inhumation rite in the medieval necropolises from Serbia, consider the deposition of coins rather a fact that illustrates the economical position than a fact connected by the inhumation rite¹⁴⁴. It is difficult to impart this opinion because an order of the fundamental acts of the existence can not be changed easily in time and it has a long persistence.

As concerns the situation of the necropolises in the mountainous Banat, the custom of the coin deposition in the graves as a funerary offering is documented, for a while, only from the 12th century. There were used the coins that had circulated in this zone of Banat. We do not have evidence concerning circulation of this custom in time beyond the Late Roman period.

We mention the presence of some clay vessels in the necropolises from the south of Banat. We know two pots found in an eccentric zone of the necropolis from Șopotu Vechi and one in the necropolis from Gornea-*Târcheviște*. The vessels are contemporaneous with the graves and they had been buried during their functioning. During the investigations from the medieval church from Mehadia, a vase that had bones of a small animal inside was found in the church. The finding of these vessels is not the only

¹⁴¹ E. Kolnikova, *Slov.Arch.*, 15, 1, 1967, p. 189-254

¹⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 253

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 247-248.

¹⁴⁴ G. Marianović-Vujović, *Balkanoslavica*, 9, 1980, p. 68.

case from the necropolises of Banat. They can be found in the necropolises from Dobrogea, Moldavia and Muntenia¹⁴⁵. D. Minić dedicated a special study to the presence of the household and glazed ceramics in necropolises. In absence of some written evidence, the explanation of these vessels contains a certain dose of subjectivity and doubt. It is probably that the custom is connected to the ancient ritual practices referring to the offerings from the dead that Christianity did eliminate. The vessels could have been put for other purpose and from other reasons¹⁴⁶. J. Ehrler, speaking about the Romanians' funeral customs in Banat in 1774, wonders about a series of practices, inclusively offerings specific to this zone put at the dead. The Romanians gave only one explanation: an ancient tradition transmitted from generation to generation¹⁴⁷.

Old Christian texts from the 7th-8th centuries AD point out the importance of the human hand in the religious ceremony and in the praying act¹⁴⁸. Diverse positions of the arms identified in the graves shows, in our opinion, the importance granted by Christians to the gesture of obedience and prayer with which the man passes in the other world. As concerns the position of the arms, it was accredited the idea that it could be considered a chronological element for dating the necropolis¹⁴⁹. Taking into consideration that the problem itself of rite did not appear in any church dogma, less we will find references in the historical sources concerning the above-mentioned problem. It constituted a problem of practice and it was transmitted as such in time. Archaeological findings from necropolises offered arguments that oppose the fact that the arms' position in graves could be used as a chronological element¹⁵⁰.

Historical Observations Concerning the Medieval Necropolises from Banat

The analysis of the funerary inventory from necropolises offered a basis of important data for the knowledge of the medieval civilization from the southern Banat. The contribution is very important because it concerns and contains a historical period (the 10th-13th centuries) when the historical information from the written sources is totally absent for this zone. In the

¹⁴⁵ G. Mănucu-Adameşteanu, *Peuce*, 9, 1984, p. 358.

¹⁴⁶ D. Minić, *GGB*, 25, 1978, p. 85-94.

¹⁴⁷ J.J. Ehrler, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹⁴⁸ *DACL*, VII, col. 392, 396 and especially col. 411; *DACL*, XI, col. 1212, 1216; *Dictionnaire des antiquités chrétiennes*, ed. A. Marigny, ed. III, Paris, 1889, p. 442, 443; P. Vintilescu, *Liturghierul explicat*, Bucureşti, 1972, p. 113.

¹⁴⁹ I. Uzum, *op. cit.*, p. 163; E. Comşa, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

¹⁵⁰ D. Ţeicu, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

same time, it completes the information from the written sources referring to the 13th-14th centuries. The necropolis from Cuptoare occupies a privileged position during the 12th-14th centuries. However, its way of publication diminished much of the value of the historical conclusions that would have permit the investigation. It constitutes, for the moment, the only necropolis investigated in a Romanian zone that had begun during the period before the written information and it functions till the attestation of the Romanian settlements in this zone.

The investigations have brought information concerning the chronology of the funerary inventory specific to this zone of Banat. Jewelry specific to the 12th century as for example glass bracelets, torque bracelets and biconical earrings are distinguished. In addition, it has been discovered a group of jewelry specific to the 13th century. Characteristic jewelry proceeding from a knezial necropolis, respectively seigniorial one from the 14th-15th centuries are known from the investigations from Reșița and Ilidia - *Oblița*. Documentary information has made possible the establishment of the founders of the feudal residence from Reșița.

Starting with the 14th century, a series of village necropolises around some wall-church are pointed out at Ilidia - *Cetate*, Mehadia, Cărbăvan, Sat Bătrân and Berzovia. A part of them had a phase of older inhumations. The investigation from Ilidia - *Cetate* proved the necropolis to have a phase of the necropolis as early as the 12th century around a wooden church.

Not one of the necropolises from Banat did benefit of anthropological analyses what diminish the importance of the investigation and of the historical conclusions.

The historical analysis of the necropolises offers important data referring to the ethnic-demographic aspect of the zone. Reconstitution of the ethnic-demographic stages during the 10th-12th centuries can be done working only with data of the archaeological investigation. This supposes incertitude taking into account the incomplete character of several of the initial excavations. The necropolis from Șopotu Vechi - *Mârvilă* remains the only one exhaustively investigated. It is very important being situated in a close depression whose Romanian ethnic character in the medieval period was never disputed. Its funerary inventory proves an aspect of the material culture specific to a Romanian community from the 12th century.

The main objective that the archaeological investigation has to clear up the Hungarians' presence in this zone starting with the 10th century. Discoveries and necropolises of type "*honfoglalás*" were discovered on the western side of the mountainous zone. They can be followed starting from Deta, Denta, Voiteni, Vrșac¹⁵¹. In the actual stage of investigation the

¹⁵¹ M. Rusu, *Relations between the autochthonous population and the migratory populations on the territory of Romania*, București, 1975, p. 201-215.

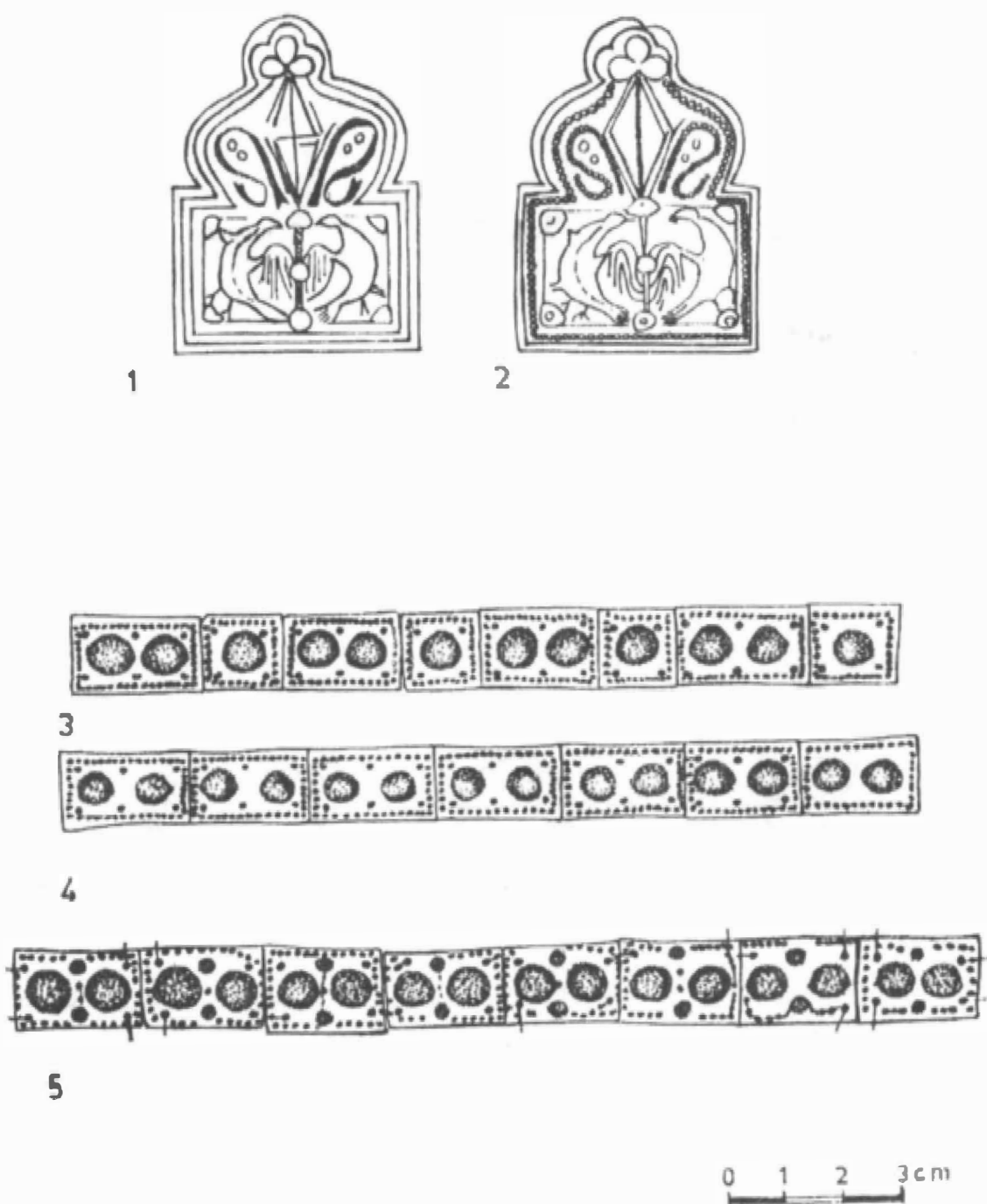


Fig. 16. Tiaras, 1-2. Thesaurus from Macoviște 3-5, pieces from the necropolis from Cuptoare (12th – 13th centuries).

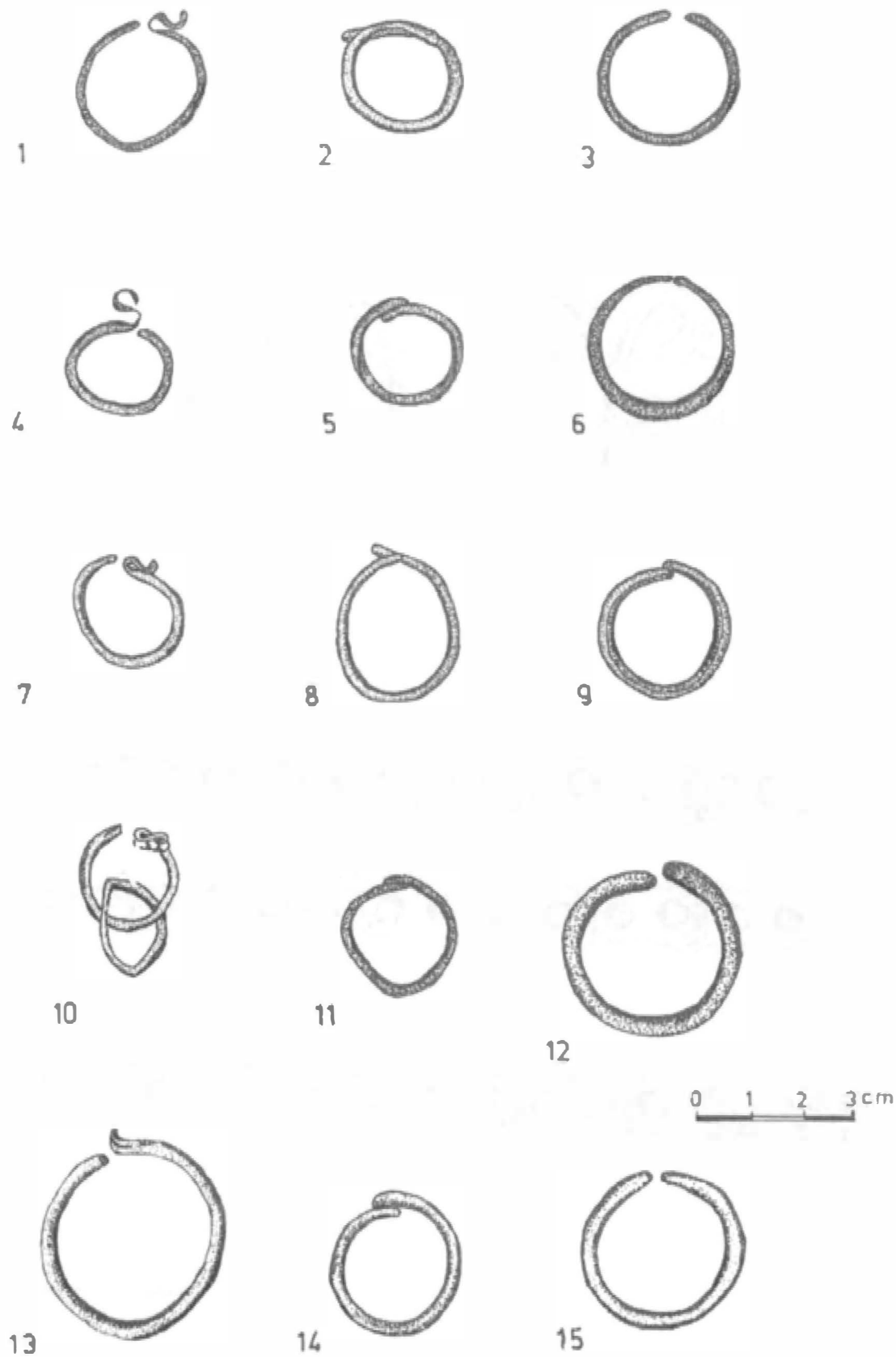


Fig. 17. Lockrings with S-shaped termination.



Fig. 18. Earrings with astragals, 1-2, 4-9, 11-13, from the necropolis from Cuptoare; 3. Gornea; 10. Șopotu Vechi.

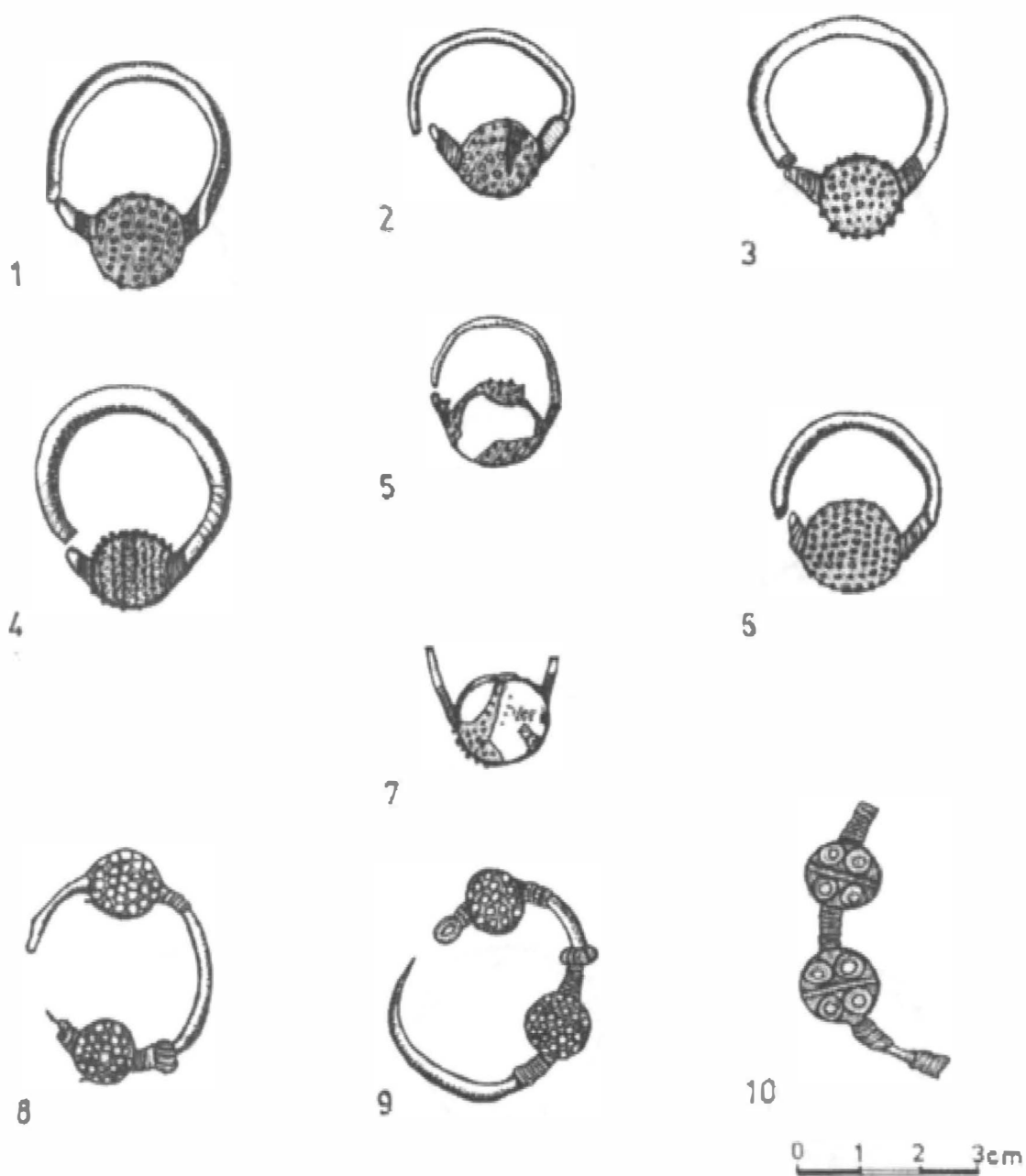
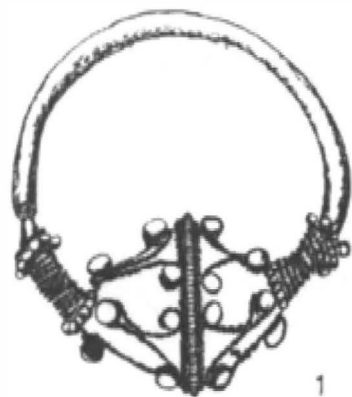
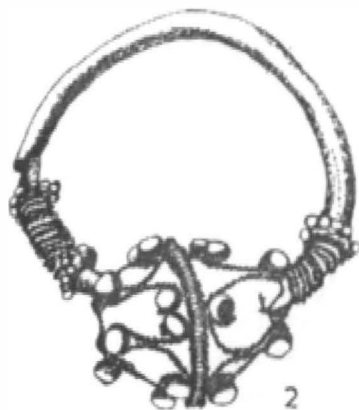


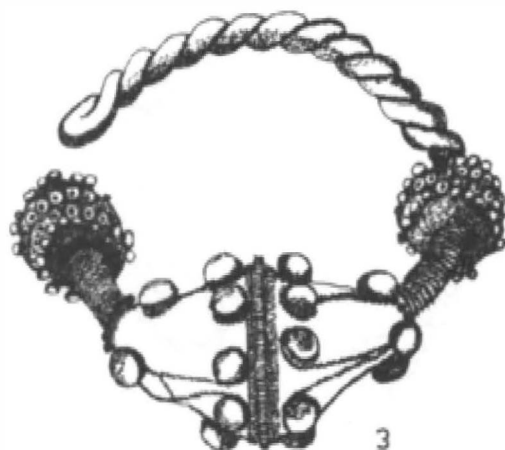
Fig. 19. Globular earrings from the necropolis from Cuptoare.



1



2



3



4



5



6

Fig. 20. Tokay type earrings, 1-2, 5-6. Cuptoare;
3. Thesaurus from Macoviște; 4. Reșița.

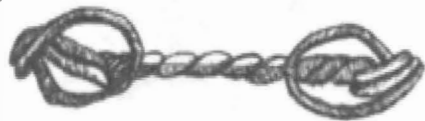


Fig. 21. Torqued bracelets (12th -13th centuries), 1-4 Cuptoare;
5. Gornea, 6. Șopotu Vechi.

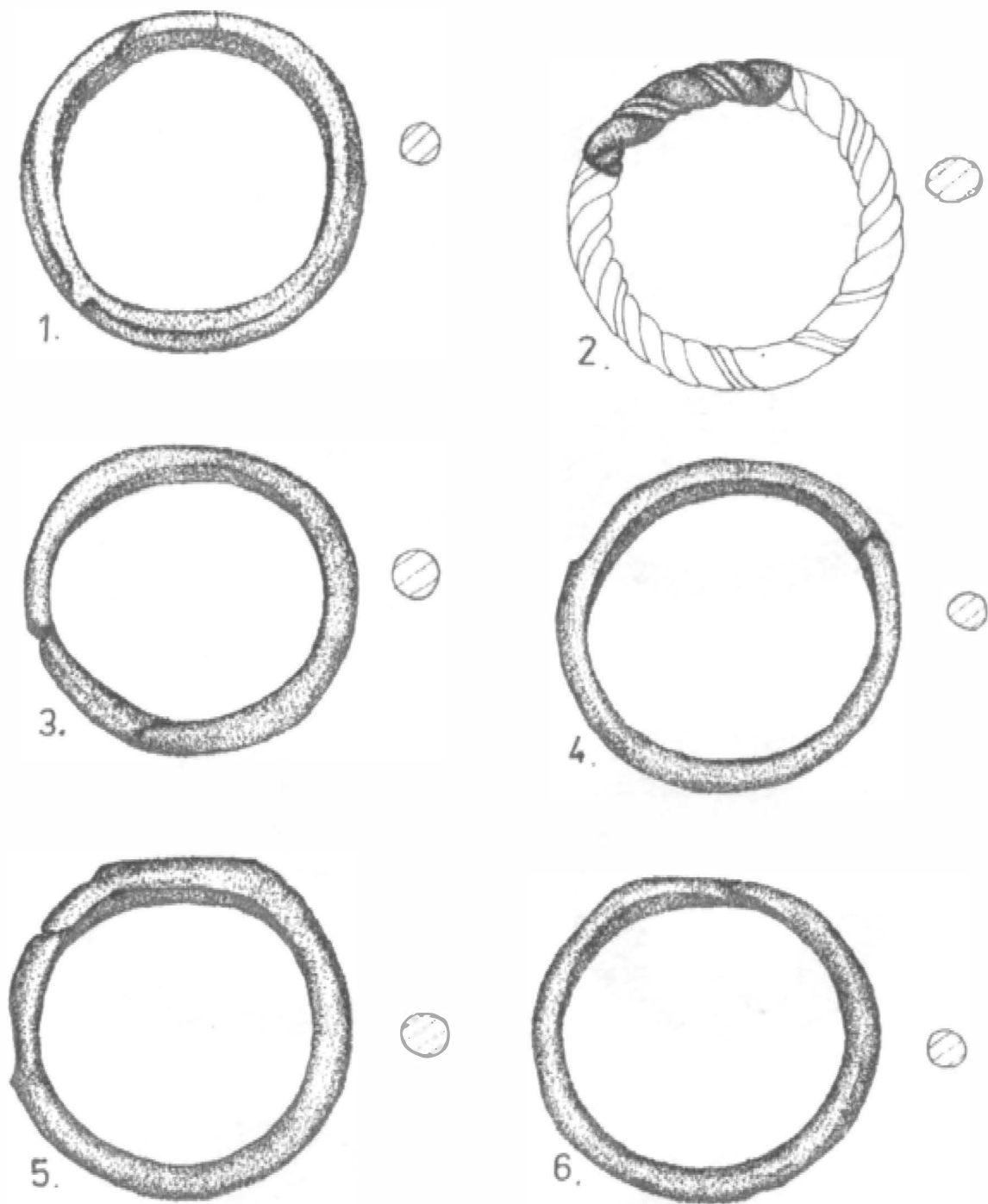


Fig. 22. Glass bracelets (12th –13th centuries), 1, 3-6 Cuptoare; 2-4. Gornea.

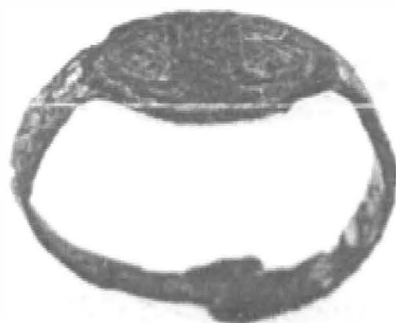
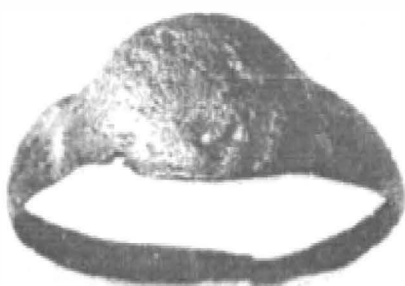
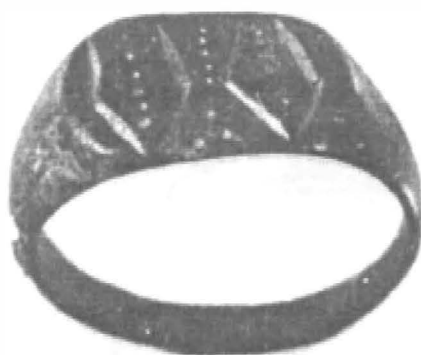
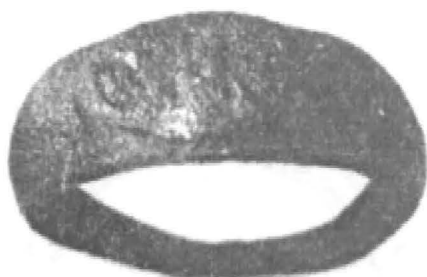


Fig. 23. Rings discovered in graves from the 12th-13th centuries from Gornea and Cuptoare.

Hungarian necropolises are absent in the space between the Danube and the Bârzava, that denotes that Banat was avoided in the west both during the expeditions of the 10th century and later on.

Part of the jewelry met in the funerary inventory of the necropolises of the 12th century, as for example temple earrings with "S"-shaped endings, are among the defining elements of the necropolises named of type "Bjelo Brdo". It has already been shown that these jewels, since the second half of the 10th century, are met in large spaces in the centre of Europe, but also at the Lower Danube¹⁵². They are found in Slavic, Hungarian cemeteries, but also in the Romanian feudal environment from Transylvania and Banat¹⁵³. The Serbian archaeologists have appreciated that the temple earrings with "S"-shaped endings remain among the few defining elements of the so-called Bjelo Brdo culture since the 11th century.¹⁵⁴

R. Popa has seriously doubted as concerns the concept of archaeological culture¹⁵⁵ that tried to define a process of ethnic-cultural synthesis in the space of the Middle Danube and the Carpathians Basin. The spreading of these jewels on large spaces in the center and the southeast of the continent invalidate the ethnical attribution of the necropolises only on the basis of some jewelry specific to the 11th-12th centuries.

5. Churches and Monasteries in Banat

The Southern Banat, unlike the Romanian region neighbor with Transylvania and Oltenia, had an unfair fate as concern the medieval cult monuments. Almost without exception, the churches built at the beginning of the Middle Age disappeared because of the historical events at the dawn of the modern epoch. A document from the beginning of 1757, "Statistics of the churches from the Diocese of Caransebeș" illustrates this exception situation that Banat had inherited as concerns the medieval architecture¹⁵⁶.

We owe our knowledge about medieval churches and monasteries from Banat exclusively to the archaeological investigations from the last

¹⁵² Z. Vana, *op. cit.*, p. 99; B. Szöke, *AAH*, 3, 1953, p. 282 and following; St. Ercegović-Pavlović, *Sirmium*, 13, 1980, p. 47; S. Georgieva, *Arheologia*, 3, 1, 1961, p. 4-9.

¹⁵³ R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 62-63, fig. 13; K. Horedt, *Moresti*, II, 1984, p. 62, Fl. Draşoveanu, *Sirmium*, 13, 1980, p. 47; S. Georgieva, *Arheologia*, 3, 1, 1961, p. 4-9.

¹⁵⁴ M. Janković, Dj. Janković, *op. cit.*, p. 148

¹⁵⁵ R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 63 and next

¹⁵⁶ I.D. Suciu, R. Constantinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 204-238.

decades. The actual image of the ecclesiastic architecture illustrates the stage of the historical and archaeological investigation, and the ten monuments in the intra - mountainous space of Banat are far from offering a complex and shaded description of the medieval architecture in comparison with the neighboring zones of Ardeal, for instance¹⁵⁷.

From any point of view, we would analyze the problem of the medieval church from Banat. The first question to which one should answer would refer to the moment when the first cult constructions in the Romanian environment appeared and what impulse generated them. The first wall or brick churches built in the Romanian feudal environment from Banat at the beginning of the Romanian Middle Ages remain, for the moment, unknown.

Information from the medieval chronicles certify Romanian social-political structures in Banat during the 10th-11th centuries which would have been able to raise up Romanian monuments of cult. In the chieftain Glad's fortress, which had a significant name – Haram, had undoubtedly existed an Episcopal Church, too. But the identification and valuation of the first Romanian foundations from this zone of Banat remains a desideratum of the future investigation¹⁵⁸.

The natural wish of systematization of information concerning the architecture of the wall church has to pass over a series of deficiencies of investigation that have not let an evaluative presentation with chronological and typological criteria. Few discovered monuments have benefited by a systematic investigation and few of them have benefited by an adequate scientific utilization according to their historical importance. Thus, we have to try a presentation of them inside the geographical micro-zones in Banat combining the above mentioned criteria.

Archaeological excavations between 1969-1970 from Ilidia - Cetate, a settlement situated in the hilly zone of the Oravița Depression, have identified the foundations of a hall-church, built up immediately after the middle of the 18th century¹⁵⁹. The church from Ilidia - Cetate, built up of stone and bricks, had a simple plan made up of a nave with interior sizes of 12.50/7 m and a rectangular altar with interior sizes of 4.50/5.30 m. In the western side of the nave at about 1.70 m distance towards the western wall, there had been the massive foundations of the two pillars that were sustaining the steeple tower (Fig. 24/A). The wall-monument had been preceded by a wooden one, located in the same place or in the close

¹⁵⁷ R. Popa, *Episcopia Aradului. Istorie, viață culturală și monumentele de artă*, Arad, 1989, p. 223 and following; A.A. Rusu, *Cători și biserici din Țara Hațegului până la 1700*, Satu Mare, 1997, p. 141 and following.

¹⁵⁸ Gy. Györffy, *op. cit.*, III, p. 470 and following; I. Aurel Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 112-115.

¹⁵⁹ St. Matei, I. Uzum, *Acta MN*, 9, 1972, p. 555-559.

proximity that has been pointed out by the archaeological excavation. The wooden church as well as the wall church had been situated around a necropolis whose first stage, contemporaneous with the wooden church, started in no later than 12th century. The interior of the wall-church from Ilidia - *Cetate* had been painted as few fragments of wall found in the debris layer have proved. The wall-church from Ilidia - *Cetate* with its earth fortification had been violently destroyed during the 14th century, probably even in the first half. The presence of a grand stand on the western side has been appreciated as an influence of the shapes of the Late Romanic. The Benedictine monastery sites from Banat had been the promoters of the monastic architecture where the stand had been frequently used¹⁶⁰. Even if often there were made references to the historiography as concerns the monument, but the interpretation concerning its affiliation and functionality is absent. The nave's relatively big sizes offered a space of about 70 m² that makes us suppose that the hall-church from Ilidia - *Cetate* played the role of a parish church (Fig. 24).

In addition, at Ilidia, on the Oblia hill, a central typed church inside a feudal residence has been investigated. The monument had been built having at its basis a circular plan in the exterior, while the interior had been four lobed¹⁶¹. Another structure was decorating the exterior walls of the rotunda from Ilidia - *Oblia* (Fig. 25). Inside the church and around it there has been investigated a necropolis that is still a novelty after two decades since the excavations started¹⁶². The monument from Ilidia - *Oblia* has been attributed, on the basis of the plan analogies, to the 12th-13th centuries. V. Vătășianu has considered that the central type chapels can be, generally, dated during the second half of the 13th centuries, in Transylvania and Banat¹⁶³. At Cluj - Mănăstur, a rotunda-church with a similar structure to that one from Ilidia has been investigated. Its interior was six-lobed. Benedictine monks had built the rotunda-church from Cluj after the middle of the 13th century¹⁶⁴. In the northwestern corner of Banat, at Kisszombor, it is known a rotunda-church with six-lobed interior. Its construction belonged

¹⁶⁰ St. Matei, *Banatica*, 2, 1973, p. 316 and following.

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 316-317.

¹⁶² I. Uzum, *RMM-MIA*, 1988, 2, p. 42 considers, groundlessly, that around the monument there had been 200 graves. In reality, there were only about 40 graves. He has also presented, in the same study, an untrue plan of the rotunda, in a total disagree with the archaeological reality. G. Petrov, *Acta MN*, 33/1, 1996, p. 49 has noticed these contradictions and he has discussed the right plan established by St. Matei.

¹⁶³ V. Vătășianu, *Studii de artă veche românească și universală*, București, 1987, p.

¹⁶⁴ P. Iambor, St. Matei, *Acta MN*, 16, 1979, p. 608.

to the feudal family of Cenad who would have built it before 1010-1020¹⁶⁵. A representative monument of this type, the church from Karcsa¹⁶⁶, has been dated as early as the other one in the second half of the 11th century strengthened by the elements of the archaeological investigation. Historical and archaeological investigation did not reach any concord as concern the chronology of the chapels with central plan and six-lobed interior. They were considered as belonging to the 11th-12th centuries, but arguments for dating them into the second half of the 13th century¹⁶⁷ has been brought.

As concerns the rotunda - church from Ilidia, the results of the archaeological excavations should be turned into suitable scientific account for a more exact chronological framing of the monument and the explanation of their role inside the feudal residence on the hill Oblîța. The grave goods, mentioned on different occasions, suggests that there had been burials around the rotunda starting from the 14th century¹⁶⁸ and during the next century. Conclusive elements for the 12th - 13th centuries have not been identified. Thus, it can be appreciated that the monument had been raised up only at the beginning of the 14th century, maybe even to the end of the 13th century. It would chronologically end a series of monuments of central type specific to the ambiance of the Romanic art and whose presence could be followed during the 13th century. It should have the purpose of a court chapel into the feudal court from Ilidia - Oblîța. Medieval chancellery documents referring to Ilidia do not offer conclusive information as concern the founders of the rotunda and of the feudal court on the hill Oblîța. Historical and archaeological investigation should offer a solution as concern the affiliation of the residence and of the chapel. The Romanian ambiance of the settlement and zone Ilidia has no doubt. The Romanian district Ilidia had been certified in documents even in 1312. However, Ilidia is mentioned during the 14th century as a Catholic parish that was belonging to the archdeacon of Caraș.

In the ambiance of a Romanian settlement, at Cârnecea, a hall-church has been archaeologically investigated in the last years. The village Cârnecea is situated among the hills of Doclin, at the confluence of Mount Dognecea with the Caras valley. The monument from Cârnecea has an archaic plan, made up of a nave of 9.00/7.75 m at exterior and a rectangular altar with exterior sizes of 6.00/3.75 m (Fig. 26). Around the church burials

¹⁶⁵ V. Gervos-Molnar, *A középkori Magyarország rotundái*, Budapest, 1972, p. 46-47.

¹⁶⁶ I. Holl, *AAH*, 22, 1970, p. 384.

¹⁶⁷ V. Gervos-Molnar, *op. cit.*, p. 46-48; I. Holl, *op. cit.*, p. 383-385; V. Vătășianu, *Arhitectura și sculptura romanică în Panonia*, București, 1966, p. 113; A. Habosiac, *op. cit.*, p. 379; I. Bóna, *Histoire de la Transylvanie*, p. 171-172.

¹⁶⁸ D. Țicu, *Banatica*, 12/1, 1993, p. 237.

had been done probably from the end of the 14th century and during the 15th century. The local rural community had built the church from Câmecea between the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century¹⁶⁹. It had been a Romanian parish church. The village of Câmecea is mentioned in documents later, at the end of the 14th century. The same documentary sources emphasize a homogenous Romanian environment in zone starting from the 14th century¹⁷⁰.

The monument investigated at Berzovia, on the northern bank of Bârzava, also belongs to the group of the rural parish churches. Archaeological excavations during 1986-1987 have pointed out the foundations of a hall-church with a quadrilateral sanctuary. The nave of the church had interior sizes of 11/6.55 m, and the sanctuary had 6.50/4.50 m. Against the northern wall of the sanctuary, a sacristy was built (Fig. 27). Abutments sustained the nave. 1 m-walls in foundation had stone buried in mortar. Medieval builders had used brick and Roman materials besides carved stone. The ruins of the Roman camp, situated in the next vicinity, constituted a source of exploiting the construction materials¹⁷¹.

The church from Berzovia - *Pătruieni* has been identified on the basis of the diplomatic sources as belonging to the disappeared village Remetea¹⁷². The parish church from Remetea has been documentary certified at the beginning of the 15th century. The village and the medieval court Remetea, known from the chancellery acts starting from 1323, belonged to the powerful feudal family Himfy. They have located on the northern bank of Bârzava, at Berzovia. Archaeological investigation, excepting a fragment from the western portal of the church, has not pointed out elements of architecture, which would offer a more shaded image of the monument. The presence of the abutments, even from foundations connected to the walls of the nave suggests that a vault had covered it. The abutments, as major elements of support, were characteristic for the gothic architecture in the local context from Transylvania. Cautiously, we can consider that the monument from Berzovia belonged to the gothic architecture from Banat. The construction of the church from Berzovia, on the basis of the documentary information concerning the medieval village Remetea and of the analogies of plan, had taken place in the second half of the 14th century¹⁷³.

In the same zone of the Bârzava valley, at Bocșa, there had been

¹⁶⁹ D. Teicu, *Arheologia satului medieval din Banat*, p. 56.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 70.

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 37-38.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 38-39.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

the headquarters of the Franciscan order¹⁷⁴ in the second half of the 14th century. The Franciscan monks had been the promoters of a simplified gothic architecture that had undoubtedly influenced the evolution of the ecclesiastic architecture in the Romanian environment in the zone¹⁷⁵. Diplomatic sources mention, even at the middle of the 12th century, the existence of a church at *Mezeusumlov*, in the plain zone of the Bârzava valley. They also mention that, at the end of the 13th century, there had been an Augustine monastery founded by the king Béla IV¹⁷⁶. However, future investigation has to identify these churches, to study them for the knowledge of the beginning of the Catholic architecture in the southern Banat.

On the superior course of the Bârzava valley, at Reșița, there have been kept the ruins of a hall-church of small sizes. The monument has an simple archaic plan, a nave with 5/6 m in interior and a square altar with 3/3m in interior too (Fig. 28). Archaeological investigations between 1983-1985 have pointed out a part of the necropolis that had been around the church. It had had a phase of burials anterior to the construction of the wall-monument. Stratigraphic observations and the analysis of the funerary inventory have offered elements for dating the moment of the construction of the wall-church, at the middle or immediately towards the second half of the 14th century¹⁷⁷. The church from Reșița played the role of a court chapel inside the medieval residence of the lords of Țerova. Chancellery documents offer information about this Romanian family that owned the superior course of the Bârzava valley to Mount Semenic, only at the beginning of the 15th century. The lords of Țerova had built their court church at Reșița even in the middle of the 14th century. It had been very probably preceded by a wooden construction before. Taking into account that only the church foundations exist, we can not appreciate the monument's architecture. Fragments of interior mortar of the nave keep traces of painting what denotes that the church had been painted. In what measure the monument from Reșița with an archaic plan adopted elements specific to the gothic, taking into consideration the period when it had been built, remains without answer.

In the Belareca valley, at about 2-km north to Mehadia, the ruins of a hall-church are still visible. The nave has 7.60/7.40 m in interior, and the altar has 6/5.20 m. Subsequently, a sacristy of the altar had been built with 5/6 m in interior (Fig. 28/B). The archaeological test trench, from 1985, pointed out a part of the surrounding necropolis, as well as the existence

¹⁷⁴ L. Wadingus, *Annales*, IX, 1932, p. 294-295.

¹⁷⁵ C. Popa, *Pagini de veche artă românească*, IV, București, 1981, p. 72 – 73.

¹⁷⁶ F. Knauz, *MES*, I, 1874, p. 583

¹⁷⁷ D. Țeicu, *op. cit.*, p. 6 and following.

of the sacristy¹⁷⁸. The modest funerary inventory has offered few chronological poles that indicate that the church belongs to the 14th century. Byzantine *scyphata* coins and a treasure of five cult vessels have been found in the zone of the church ruins. These ones would plead for an older age of the inventory¹⁷⁹.

Medieval constructors had used tiles and Roman bricks besides stone to build the church. The ruins of the Roman camp from the close vicinity had constituted an important quarry. An essential problem referring to the monument, to which systematic archaeological excavations should answer, is in what measure the monument had been contemporaneous with the settlement from the 12th-13th centuries to which it belonged. The Byzantine coins discovered here, probably of the 12th century, justifies the supposition of an older age of the monument.

Documentary information from the 8th decade of the 14th century proves the existence of some knezial ownership over the zone from the confluence of the Belareca with the Bolvaşniţa valley. The king Ludovic I donated, in the summer of 1376, the estate of the Bolvaşniţa valley from the district of Mehădia to our Romanians "Şurian, Bogdan and Dimitrie, Toma and Vasiu, Baic's sons". The royal donation was a result of the confiscation of an older Romanian ownership that had belonged to Ladislau, Lechach's son, who was a refugee in the Romanian Country¹⁸⁰.

The medieval church from Căvăvan, the nowadays Constantin Daicoviciu, known because of the excavations executed by I. Miloia in 1930, is included in the series of hall-churches with a square altar. The construction has a much elongated and narrow nave. Two square pillars from the wall in the western side, which had sustained undoubtedly a steep-tower, have fragmented its space. Two abutments, in a 45° angle, had been placed on the western side of the nave. Another two abutments had sustained the northern and eastern walls of the altar. Subsequently, it is considered that these sustaining elements had been also raised up on the other walls of the nave (Fig. 29.A). The author of the investigation has attributed the church from Căvăvan to the constructive action of some western monastic orders that had activated in that zone during the 13th century¹⁸¹. V. Vătăşianu considered that the monument from Căvăvan seems to be rather an adaptation of the old type of the hall-church to the gothic style from the first half of the 15th century¹⁸².

The church from Căvăvan had been constructed into a fair/borough,

¹⁷⁸ Investigations St. Matei, D. Ţaicu

¹⁷⁹ N. Stoica de Haţeg, *Scrieri. Cronica Mehădiei şi a Băilor Herculane*, edition seen by D. Mioc and C. Feneşan, Timişoara, 1984, p. 56.

¹⁸⁰ DRH, D, 1979, p. 108-109; C. Feneşan, *Banatica*, 5, 1979, p. 288

¹⁸¹ I. Miloia, *AnB*, III, 4, 1930, p. 31-49.

which had been the center of the Romanian district with the same name. It had the role of a parish church. The medieval borough Caran has been identified within the built-up area of the actual village Căvăvan. Around it, in the Timiș valley, a small Romanian district was constituted¹⁸³.

In the actual center of the town Caransebeș, the archaeological investigation from 1988 has unearthed the remains of a monastic complex. The hall-church constitutes the central building, which is a big enough edifice. The nave of the church had a useful surface of about 125 m², with 15/8.40 m, the quire slightly elongated of 5.90/5.50 m, margined by sacristy on the northern wall. The semicircular apse of the altar was 5 m in width. Two abutments in a 45°-angle are linked to the western walls of the nave. In an ulterior stage of the construction of the church, four pairs of asymmetric abutments along the long sides of the nave were added (Fig. 29.B). Beside the river stone and the quarry stone, the medieval constructors had used Roman materials found in that zone for building up the church. Oblique abutments had been raised using squared stone blocks. In the central and western zone of the nave, below the floor level, 11 tombs had been arranged. Initially, the church had three tombs, the rest of them being added subsequently. The church from Caransebeș – as the author of the archaeological investigation, Petru Bona, has appreciated – had been built in two stages: at the middle of the 13th century, the whole edifice had been built, including the two oblique abutments on the western side. The second stage is dated at the end of the 13th century, when the pairs of abutments had been added on the long sides of the nave¹⁸⁴. It has been appreciated that the monument represents an orthodox creation of the Romanian community from the medieval town, considered one of the oldest Romanian wall-churches from the urban environment of Transylvania and Banat.

R. Popa, in approaching the problem of the cult monument from Caransebeș, has questioned the historical observations connected to this and he sustains that the church from Caransebeș belonged to an ensemble of constructions that were making a monastic establishment. The fragments of walls kept in the north and northeast of the church, built up in the same technique as the church, represents parts of the monastic precincts¹⁸⁵. The archaeological investigation was partial and it concerned only the church and not the ensemble of the zone what diminished much of the global image about the ensemble of constructions. Sustained by the documentary information, R. Popa has appreciated that the monastic

¹⁸² V. Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Țările Române*, București, 1959, p. 258.

¹⁸³ I. Miloia, *AnB*, IV, 1, 1931, p. 33; Al. Horvath, *StCIEC*, 2, 1977, p. 403.

¹⁸⁴ P. Bona, *Biserica medievală din Caransebeș*, Reșița, 1993, p. 57-68.

¹⁸⁵ R. Popa, *SCIVA*, 40, 4, 1989, p. 365-368

establishment from Caransebeș had been the Franciscan monks' work, that they had built " the earliest in the second half of the 13th century"¹⁸⁶. He has noted, with the same occasion, a certain gap between the chronological moment resulted from the stylistic analysis of the monument and the written information. Coming back to the disputed problems connected to the construction moment, to the significance of the ensemble and its confessional assignment, there is at hand a final report of the archaeological investigation corroborated with the information from the written sources.

It has to be specified that the ensemble of constructions from Caransebeș has represented a monastic ensemble that included a huge hall-church and a monastery. The inventory of the graves investigated in tombs and outside of them offer references to the chronology of the monument. The 18 coins put there as funerary offering belong in great majority to the 14th century, two of them belonging to the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century, being Sigismund of Luxembourg's issues. As concerns the jewelry, it has been noticed the custom of some buckles specific to the 15th-16th centuries. The rings have close analogies in the same period, but only few of them can be attributed to the 14th century. From the analysis of the funerary inventory, we can conclude that the burials in the tombs of the church had not been done earlier than the end of the 14th century. It is difficult to explain why burials had not been done during the entire 13th century and the 14th century, whether the church had been really built at the beginning of the 13th century or even in the second half of this period. Coming back to the plan structure of the analyzed monument, it is obvious the combination of some archaic elements of architecture, specific to the Roman period: the semicircular apse of the altar beside elements specific to the gothic architecture. In the local context of the architecture from Transylvania, the presence of the abutments defines the assignment of a monument to the gothic period. The abutments placed in a 45° angle had been built in a mature and late stage of the gothic¹⁸⁷. Archaeological information corroborated with the plan analogies of the church, we think that it sustains a later dating of the church in the second half of the 14th century than it has proposed till now. The chancellery documents certifies the Franciscan convent from Caransebeș only in 1428. This comes to confirm an older privilege from the king Ludovic I (1342-1382)¹⁸⁸. Documentary information from the 8th decade of the 14th century announces the presence of the Franciscan

¹⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 366.

¹⁸⁷ E. Greceanu, *SCIA*, 18, 1, 1971, p. 43; C. Popa, *op. cit.*, and note 317 where he pleads for a late dating of the abutments of 45° angle during the 15th century.

¹⁸⁸ I. D. Suciu, R. Constantinescu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 88-90.

order at Caransebeș¹⁸⁹.

Historical and archaeological documents about the beginnings of organizing the orthodox monasteries in the mountainous Banat are extremely modest. The older Hungarian historiography from the beginning of the 20th century has gathered historical information referring to monasteries, but the Eastern-Greek places have been considered Serbian foundations¹⁹⁰. Archaeological investigations from Vărădia and Cusici have brought a few conclusive elements to improve somewhat the general image of the orthodox monasteries from the south of Banat. Information from the Turkish documents, issued between 1554-1579, prove the existence, at that time in the mountainous zone of Banat, the monasteries Zlatița, Baziaș, Cusici, Mesici (Fig. 31), Srediște, Sirinia and the Saint Archangels from Izvorul Temevei, near Moldova Nouă¹⁹¹. The ruins of the church-monastery from Cusici still keeps the plan of a one nave edifice, a polygonal altar in exterior and semicircular in interior (Fig. 32/A).

The present plan of the church, hypothetically dated to the 15th century - on the basis of some typological similarities belongs, in fact, to a subsequent epoch. The archaeological investigations, still unpublished, offer important information concerning the building stages of the monument. The church of the Cusici monastery had probably been built around the year 1400. It had a simple tri-conical plan with a rectangular narthex, which was communicating through a narrow opening with the nave, above which the spire raised. The pilasters, which were framing the apses and support the spire porch, determined the construction of some niches inside the nave (Fig. 32, A). In the close vicinity of the Cusici monastery, in the Nera valley, the monastic establishment at Zlatița was located. The location of its church, dedicated to "Saint Sava", mentioned in the Turkish documents from 1569-1574, but much older in fact, is still unknown.

The Baziaș monastery was located near the confluence of a little valley with the Danube. The medieval archaeological investigations that are still in progress determine a series of discussions related to the chronological aspects and the stages of building of the monument, which are presented with the proper prudence. Thus, two stages in the building of the church of the Baziaș monastery had been recorded. The initial monument had the plan of a simple tri-cone, which subsequently, probably in

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 78; V. Achim, *RI*, VII, 5-6, 1996, p. 389 and following.

¹⁹⁰ J. Karácsonyi, *Történeti és régészeti Értesítő*, 1905, p. 76-88; J. Szentkláray, *A szerb monostoregyházak történeti emlékei Delmagyarországon*, Budapest, 1908, p. 46-53; V. Vlăduceanu, *Mănăstiri bănățene*, Timișoara, 1947p. 10-12, without documentary contributions, I.D. Suciu, *Monografia Mitropoliei Banatului*, Timișoara, 1977, p. 70-72.

¹⁹¹ I.D. Suciu, R. Constantinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 344; Engel P., *op. cit.*, p. 133, 152, 128.

1721, suffered an elongation of the narthex and the construction of a steeple-tower on the western side. An inscription embedded in the wall documents this fact. The church had an elongated narthex, a square nave to which the three apses were connected having a semicircular tract both inside and outside. The pilasters that had marked the two lateral apses at the nave had to support the spire steeple that was crowning the nave (Fig. 32, B). The answer to the question concerning the moment of building the church from Baziaș can be suggested on the basis of the structural analogies with the Serbian churches south of the Danube and with those from Oltenia, that plead for its dating around the year 1400. The investigations in the necropolis situated around the church will certainly bring more precise elements concerning this problem. The church of the monastery Sirinia, recently investigated, from the Iron Gates of the Danube, show a simple tri-cone plan. Structurally, the church had an elongated narthex with 6.50/5.50 m at the exterior. The lateral apses of the nave as well as the altar apse had a semicircular tract both inside and outside (Fig. 30/3).

A similar plan also had the church of the Mraconia monastery built at the mouth of the omonymous valley from the region of the "Cazane Mici" of the Danube (Fig. 30/2). The Ottoman documents mention monasteries at Svinița, Moldova Veche, Baziaș, in the Danube Basin in Banat at the middle of the 16th century. The scarce archaeological documents that we dispose of presents some important matters connected to the architecture of the medieval monasteries. The churches of the monasteries built between the 14th-15th centuries had adopted the simple tri-cone plan that could be recorded, during the same period, for the monasteries from Oltenia, built by the monarchs of Wallachia. The initial impulse in adopting this type of church came from the Serbian feudal milieu of the 14th century. And this fact has been admitted by the Romanian historiography. The way of the tri-cone shape north of the Danube could not avoid the space of the southern Banat, which played the role of a cultural passage. More precise chronological mentions concerning the stages of this way remains among the priorities of the specialists in medieval archaeology.¹⁹²

Nuclei of orthodox monastic life had undoubtedly existed in the mountainous zone of Banat, as well as in other parts of the Romanian counties, at the beginning of the Middle Age. The cave paintings from Ilidia, situated in an afforested zone and withdrawn under the peaks of the Anina Mountains, represent undoubtedly the witness of the existence of "reclusion" in that place at the beginning of the 2nd millenium¹⁹³. On the

¹⁹² R. Teodorescu, *op. cit.*, p. 292-297; C. Moisescu, *Arhitectura românească veche*, București, 2001, p. 147, 189.

¹⁹³ R. Teodorescu, *op. cit.*, p. 88-89; Ch. Delvoye, *Artă bizantină*, II, București, 1976, p. 82; R. Ljubiuković, Dj. Bosković, *Starinar*, 7-8, 1956, p. 91-112

rock walls, nimbus images, crosses and prayers had been rendered clumsily and schematically. Also in the depression Oravița, on the bank of the Caraș, at Vărădia, there had existed formerly a monastery whose memory was kept even since the 18th century, perpetuated only by the name of the hill - *Chili*¹⁹⁴. It seems that the monastic life from Vărădia had pulsed even since the 12th century, as the archaeological discoveries suggest. The presence of some churches with triconic plan in the Danube passage, at Baziaș and Vodița, near Orșova, proves, on one side, the existence of some orthodox monastic nuclei and, on the other side, marks out the way of the tricone in the northern Danube space at the end of the 14th century¹⁹⁵.

We notice that the first Romanian wall-churches had been built after the middle of the 13th century in the geographic space we are interested in. Only during the 14th century, local feudals build up court chapels and parish churches start appearing. Monuments from the 13th-14th centuries still keep the stylistic stamp of the Romanic architecture on which, later, the element characteristic of the local gothic architecture will be grafted. All the churches known in the Romanian feudal environment adopted the simple archaic plan of the hall-church with square altar during this period. The monuments structured in this way were adapted to the orthodox cult. In the actual stage of knowledge of the cult monuments from Banat the delimitation of the influence area of the Southern Danube ecclesiastic architecture at the end of the 13th century and the beginning of the 14th century. The wall-churches from Turnu Severin, considered as belonging to the final period of the 13th century, certify an artistic influence in the domain of the ecclesiastic architecture come here from the Bulgarian tsardom towards the Danube orthodox world from the north of the western Lower Danube¹⁹⁶.

6. Medieval Fortifications

To know the medieval fortifications represents an important sequence for the global reconstitution of the medieval habitat of a certain zone. Archaeological sources, corroborated with the information from the written sources, represent the working tools with which we can approach the problem of the medieval fortifications in Banat. We benefit by the information offered by L.F. Marsigli's cartographic documents from the end of the 12th

¹⁹⁴ N. Tincu Velia, *Istoria bisericească politică națională*, Sibiu, 1865, p. 181.

¹⁹⁵ R. Theodorescu, *op. cit.*, p. 296-297; V. Vătășianu, *op. cit.*, p. 134-135; C. Moisesescu, *op. cit.*, p. 117, 129, 190; J. Szentklaray, *op. cit.*, p. 51-53, historical information concerning the monastery Baziaș.

¹⁹⁶ V. Vătășianu, *op. cit.*, p. 134-135; R. Theodorescu, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

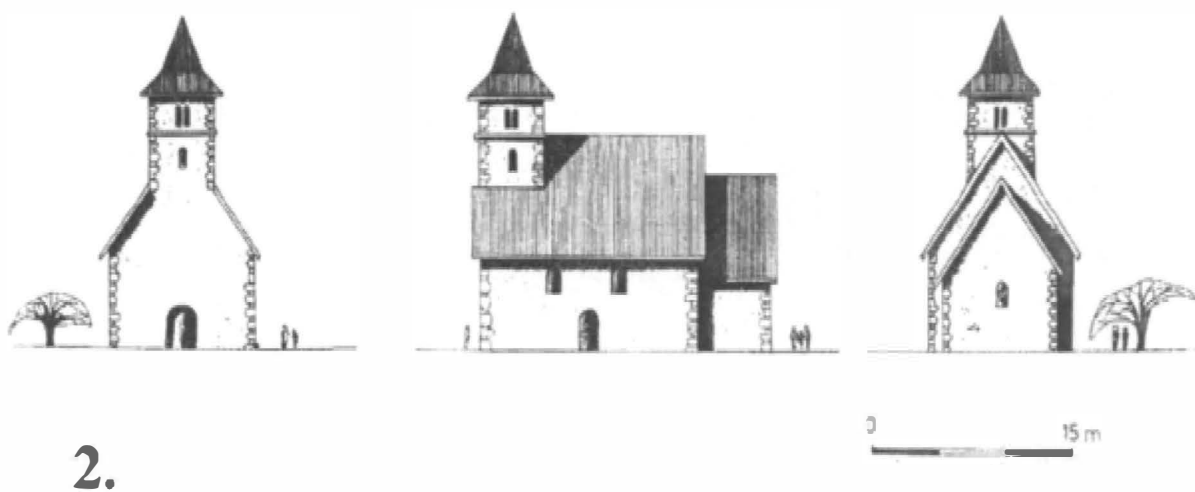
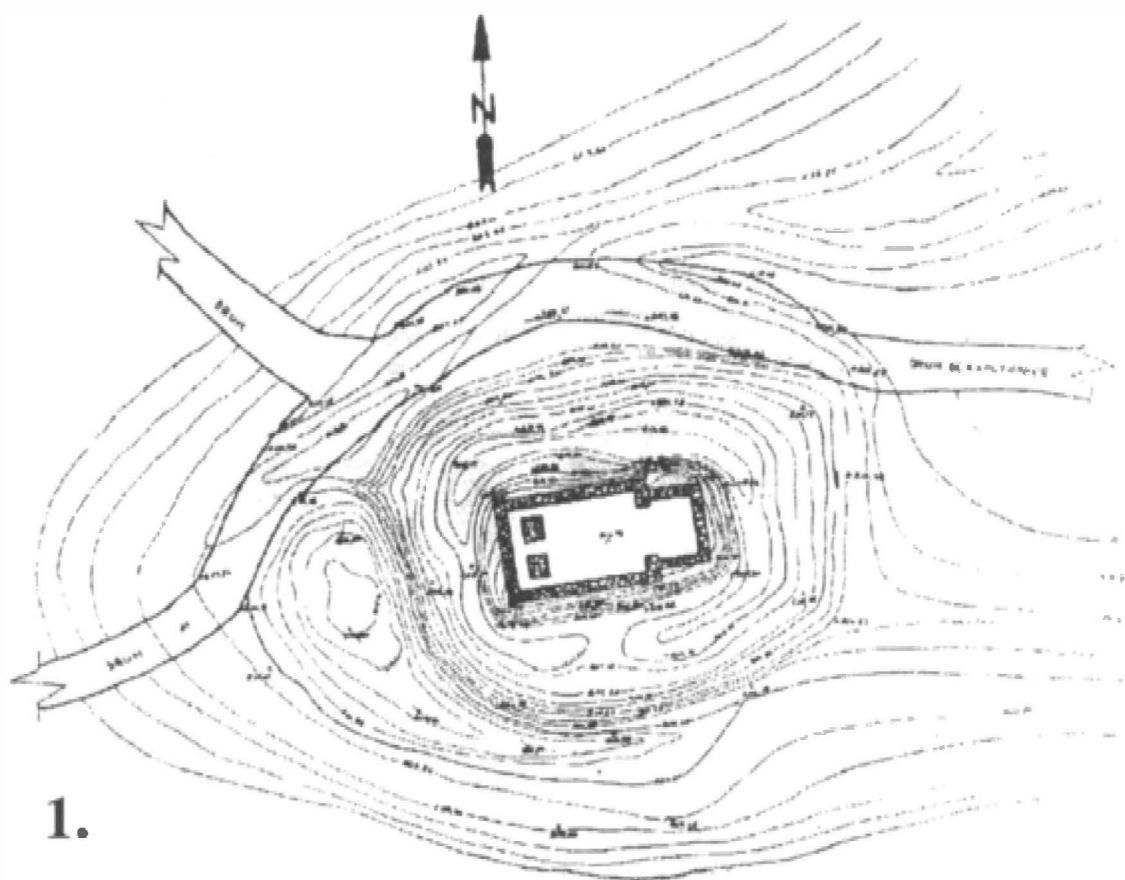


Fig. 24. Ilidia –Cetate. 1. Plan of the hall church. 2. Proposal for reconstitution.

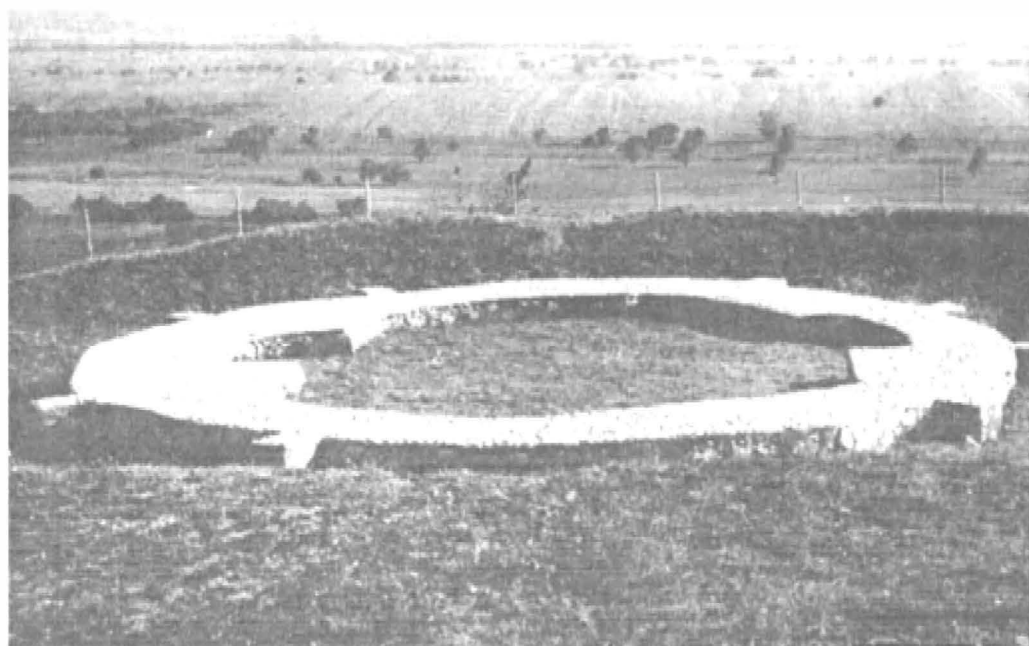
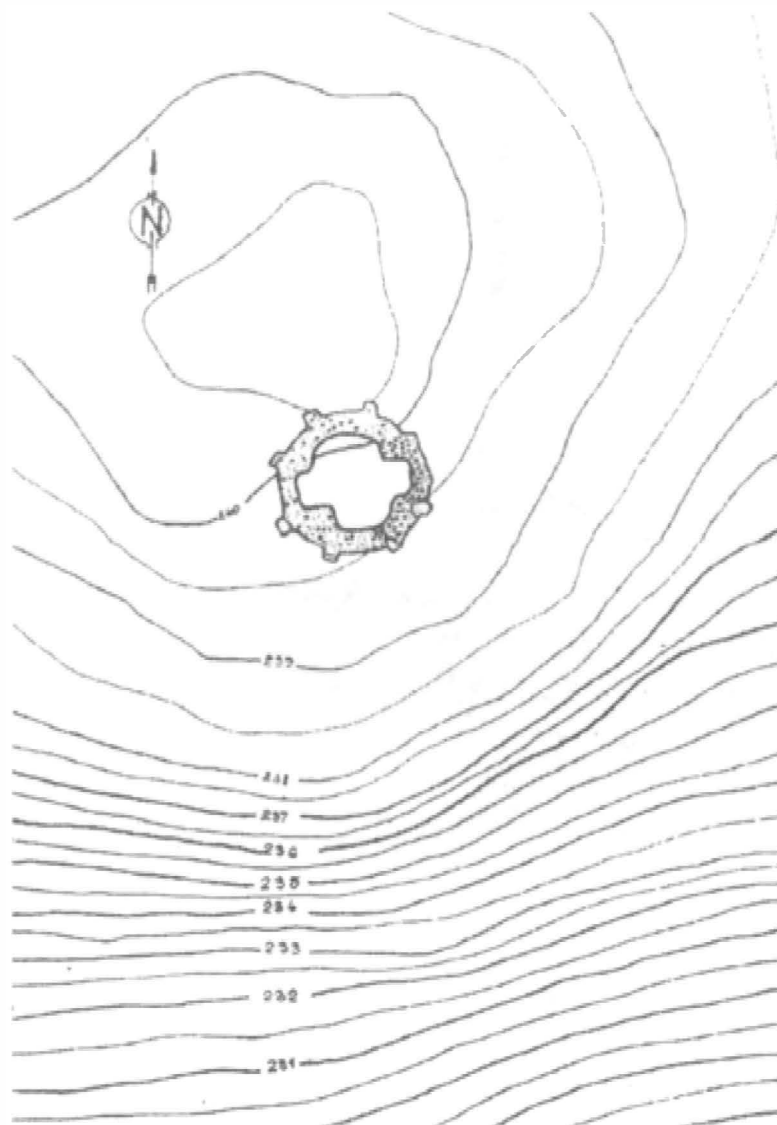


Fig. 25. Ilidia – *Oblița*. Rotunda church – plan and reconstitution.

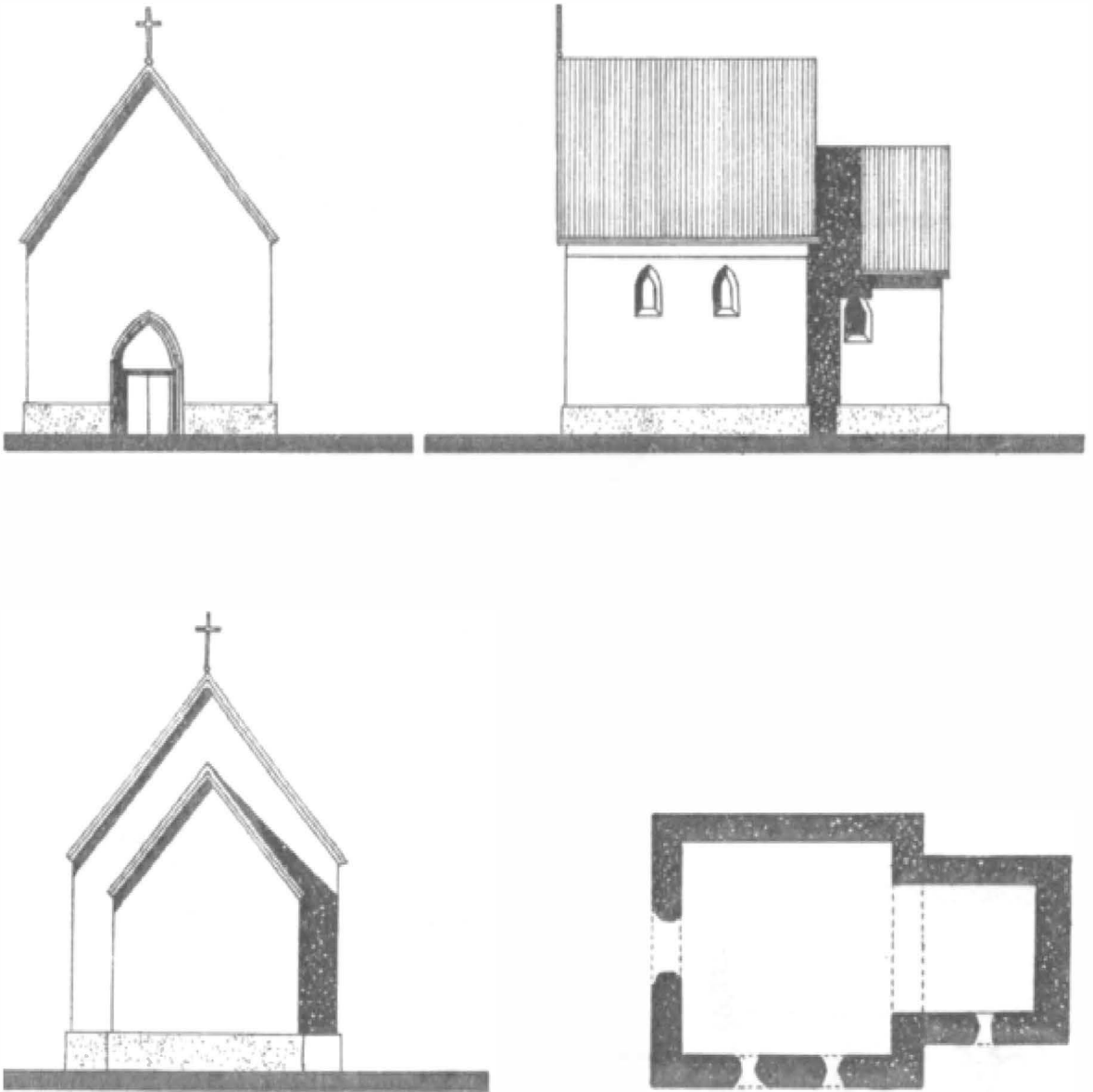


Fig. 26. Cârnecea.
Plan of the church and proposal for reconstitution.

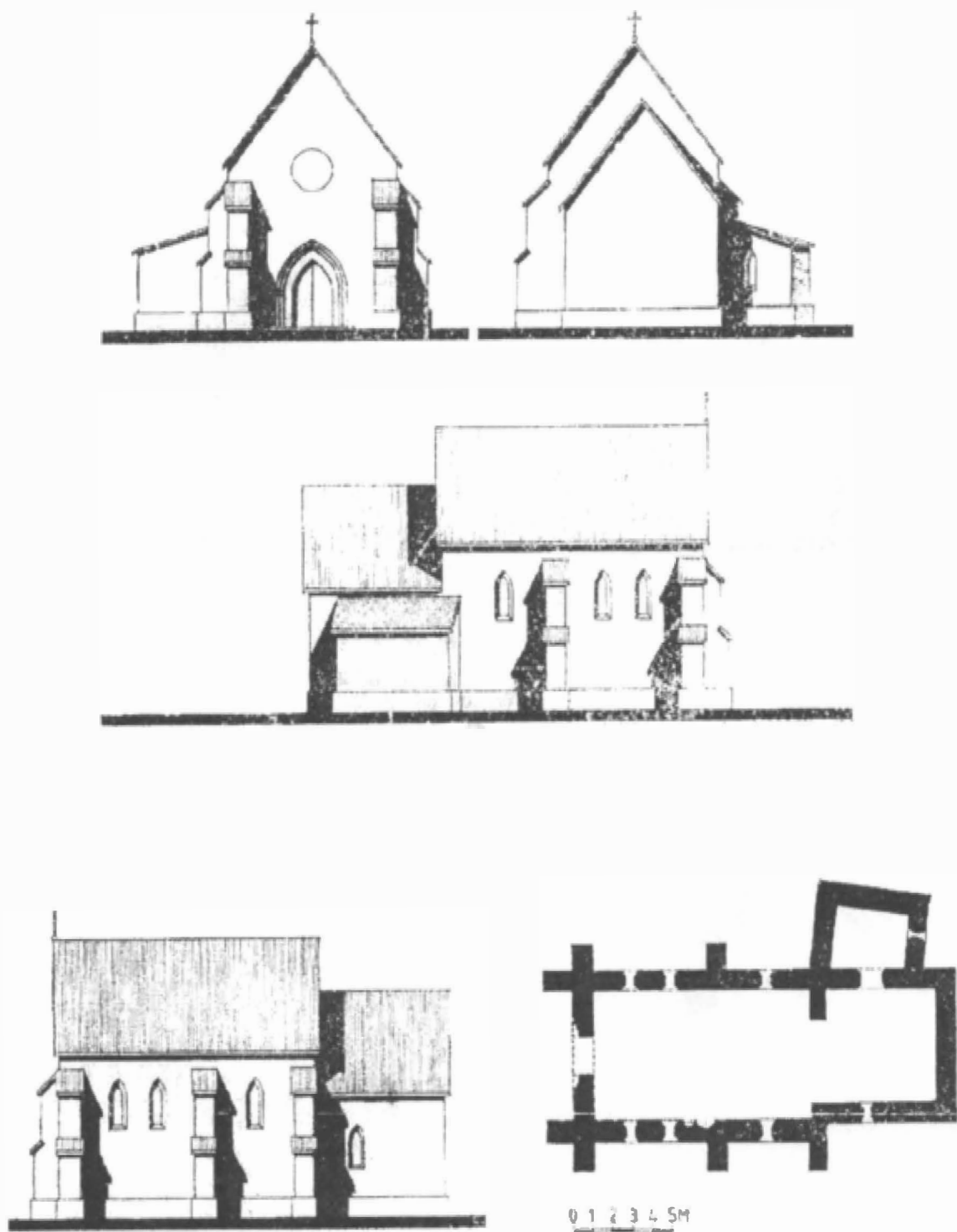
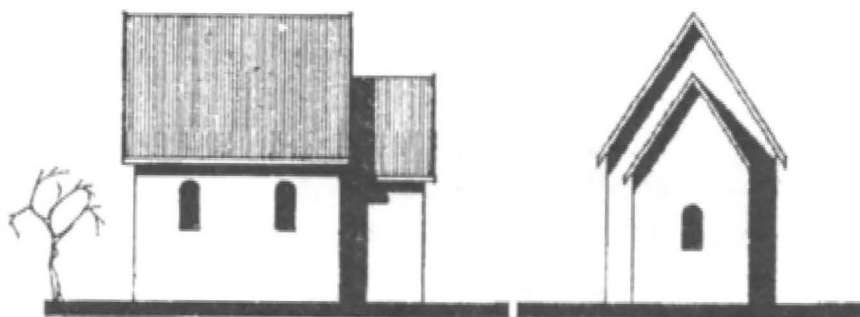
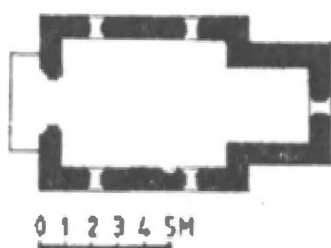


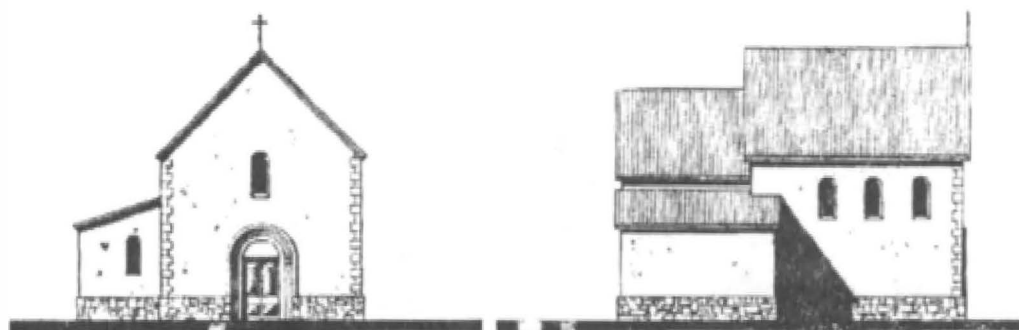
Fig. 27. Berzovia. Plan and proposal for reconstitution of the parish church Remetea.



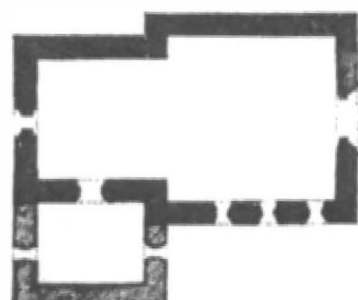
1.



MEHADIA



2.

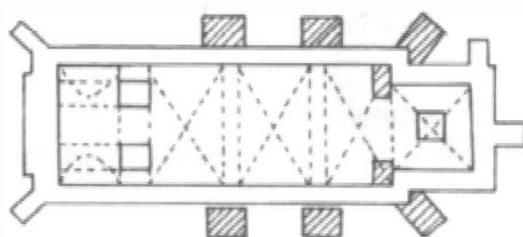


0 1 2 3 4 5M

Fig. 28. Hall churches (14th – 15th centuries). 1. Reșița; 2. Mehădia.



1.



0 10 m

2.

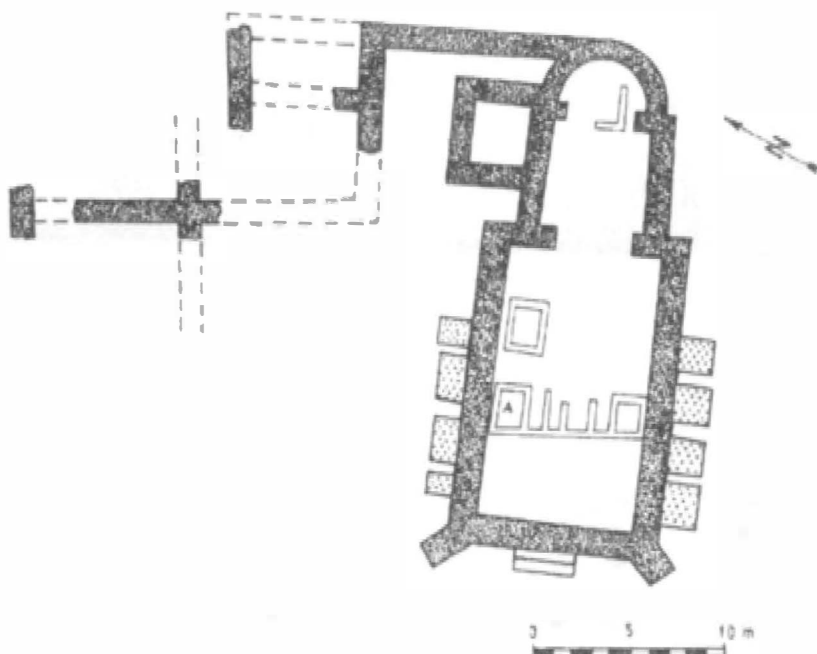
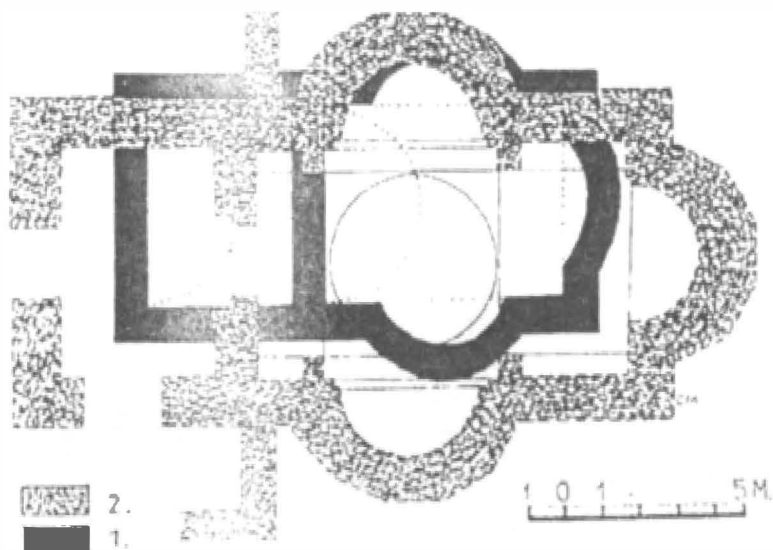
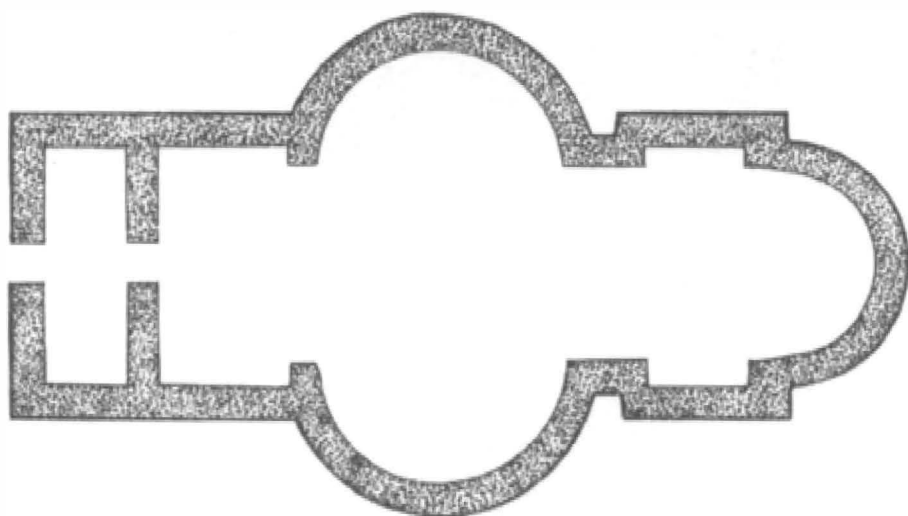


Fig. 29. Hall churches (14th –15th centuries). 1. Church of the borough Caran; 2. Church of the Franciscan monastery from Caransebeș.

1.



2.



3.

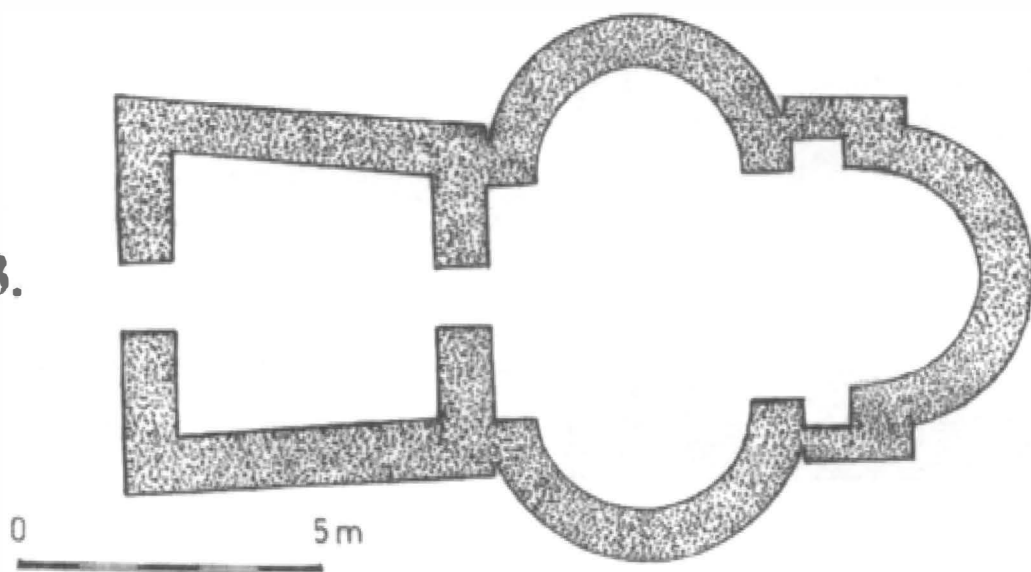


Fig. 30. Monasteries from Banat. 1. Vodița; 2. Mraconia; 3. Sirinia.

A.

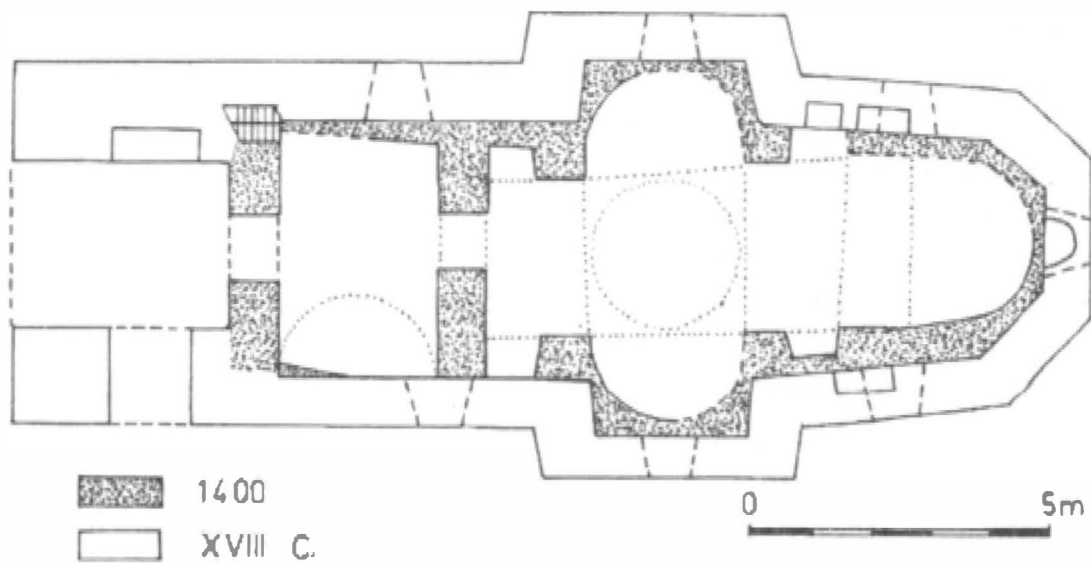


B.

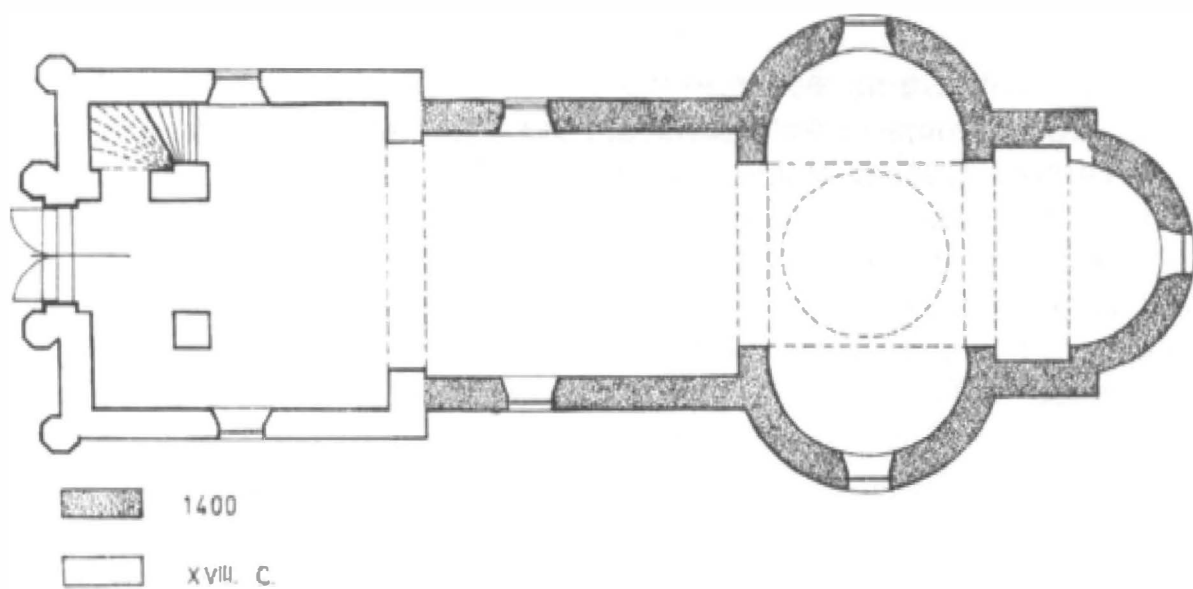


C.

Fig. 31. Monastery Mesici (15th century) and Şemlacu Mic (Moravița).



A.



B.

Fig. 32. Monastery Cusici (A) and Baziaș (B).

century for this space. The Hungarian narrative documents remain, for the moment, the principal source referring to the fortifications from the 10th-11th centuries that exist in Banat. Chancellery documents only at the beginning of the 14th century bring to light the medieval fortifications. Generally, the information found in the contents of such acts refers to the owners of a fortress or to the fortress's servants, to the boundaries of the fortress' domain or to the belonging villages. The information from the chancellery documents is in a reduced number as to reconstitute the monuments' life, but they are very useful for the reconstitution of medieval historical geography. The documents concerning the medieval fortress from the mountainous zone of Banat had been issued even from the end of the 19th century by Pesty Fr.

Medieval archaeology has to bring an essential contribution to the genesis and evolution of the fortifications' architecture in Banat. Actually we possess an adequate documentation but for a few monuments from Banat. We can mention the investigations from the fortress from Mehadia, Pescari and Jdioara. The archaeological test trenches referred also to the fortresses from Bocșa, Ilidia, Turnu Ruieni and Vrșac. They offer partial information concerning the planimetry and the chronology of the monuments.

The system of medieval fortifications from the mountainous Banat has already constituted a old preoccupation of the multicultural historiography from Banat. Pesty Fr. and F. Milleker had certainly approached, with inherent limits, the problem of the medieval fortress from the ex-county Caraș and from the Banat of Severin. The interest in the medieval monuments from Banat started again from the 7th decade of the 20th century. Special studies owed to Th. Trăpcea, Șt. Matei, N. Săcară and A. Bejan have approached for the last three decades, from different perspectives, the medieval fortifications from Banat¹⁹⁷. This problem of the fortress from Banat is also to be found in some general studies dedicated to the medieval history of Transylvania by Șt. Pascu and A.A.Rusu¹⁹⁸. The existence of some fortifications in Banat is linked to the activity of some pre-state political groups that had controlled the zone. *Anonymus' Chronicle*, the narrative source always mentioned for the knowledge of the realities of the beginning of the 10th century from the

¹⁹⁷ Th. Trăpcea, *StIB*, 1, 1969, p. 26+54, study with very much inaccuracies concerning the planimetry and the chronology of the fortifications, Șt. Matei, *op. cit.*, p. 103-122; N. Secară, *Banatica*, 3, 1975, p. 303-308; idem, *Tibiscus*, 4, 1975, p. 167-185; A. Bejan, *Tibiscus*, 4, 1975, p. 155-167.

¹⁹⁸ Șt. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, II, 1979, p. 246-250; A.A. Rusu, *op. cit.*, p. 177-197; A.A. Rusu, G. Pascu Hurezan, *Cetăți medievale din județul Arad*, Arad, 999, p. 20-28.

western Lower Danube, mentions the fortresses from Orșova, Keve and Horom. The territory between the Danube and the Mureș had its own political structure, as the historical source mentions, which was led by Glad – “*Glad ducem, qui dominium habebat a fluvio Morus usque ad castrum Horom*”.

The Hungarian army thus confirming his defeat had conquered the duke Glad's fortresses “*castrum Keve and Ursova*”. The historical source mentions just the three fortresses from Banat between the 9th and the 10th century, without any other explanations concerning their description and localization. As we have already mentioned, in absence of some archaeological investigations, it is difficult to imagine the internal structure and the construction technique of the mentioned camps only on the basis of some analogies¹⁹⁹. In fact, there had not been a concord in historiography not even as concerns the exact localization of the mentioned fortifications in *Anonymus' Chronicle* because of the same deficiency of the archaeological investigation. Thus, M. Bizerea proposed the identification of the mentioned “*castrum Ursova*”, not at Orșova as it was usually admitted in historiography, but at Vrșac²⁰⁰. Linguistic and geographic arguments can sustain this historical hypothesis. The other two fortifications of Glad mentioned in *Anonymus' Chronicle* have been located at Cuvin “*castrum Keve*” and at Palanka “*castrum Horom*”²⁰¹. Surface collections have identified earth – fortifications at Domașnea, Armeniș, Pescari, Șoșdea and Berzovia, which have not been archaeologically investigated. At Pescari, below the 12th century stone wall, an earth fortification had been identified, belonging to the 8th-9th centuries, given the ceramics found²⁰². The partial investigation does not allow firm conclusions concerning the existence of some earth and wooden fortifications at Pescari in the 8th-9th centuries. Few investigations, for the most fortifications of this type, from the space within the Carpathians, have generated divergent opinions referring to the attribution of these earthen fortresses to the Romanian society²⁰³. Scarce archaeological documentation obtained from the incomplete investigations do not offer the support necessary to some firm dating and of some sure reconstitution of the social and political history of the 9th-11th centuries. Identification and archaeological investigation of the existent fortifications in the south of Banat, in the moment of the impact

¹⁹⁹ R. Theodorescu, *op. cit.*, p. 114; M. Rusu, *Acta MN*, 8, 1971, p. 198.

²⁰⁰ M. Bizerea, *StIB*, 5, 1978, p. 4-6.

²⁰¹ Gy. Györffy, *op. cit.*, III, p. 317-318; 487.

²⁰² St. Matei, I. Uzum, *Banatica*, 2, 1973.

²⁰³ St. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, I, ed. 2, p. 217 and following; R. Popa, *SCIVA*, 42, 3-4, p. 167-169 he doubts as concerns the attribution of the earth fortifications from the space within the Carpathians to the Romanian society.

with the Hungarians at the end of the 9th century, remains an open matter in duty of the next investigation.

The archaeological excavations have offered Very important information for the beginning of the architecture of wall fortifications in Banat from Ilidia. Inside the feudal residence on the hill Oblîța, the foundations of a wall construction with 11/11 m (Fig. 33, B) have been identified. Its plan has been established on the basis of the fragments of foundation and of its ditch trace. The wall in foundation was about 0.90 m in thickness. Medieval constructors had used brick and mortar beside quarry stone that had been at hand. A median wall separates the constructive structure in two compartments. The archaeological inventory sustains a dating of the dwelling-tower from Ilidia - *Oblîța* in the second half of the 12th century²⁰⁴. The monument from Ilidia asks that the problems concerning the appearance of the category of fortifications, the dwelling-towers, in the Romanian space be discussed again. Romanian historiography, In special studies from the last decades dedicated to this matter, was unanimous in establishing the moment of its genesis in the second half of the 13th century, more probably in the 7th decade²⁰⁵. Archaeological investigations at the monuments from Transylvania, for instance at Cetatea de Baltă, have proved that the dwelling-tower had started to appear shyly even in the first half of the 13th century.

The stone dwelling-tower had undoubtedly transposed the older traditions of the wooden architecture. It was appreciated as one of the important innovations of the architecture of fortifications in the western Europe from the 11th century. Ecclesiastic architecture had played an important role to impose itself during the 12th century²⁰⁶. The outlines of these fortifications had spread in the central European space in the 13th century while, in the peripheral space it flourished just during the 14th century. The dwelling-tower perpetuating traditions of the architecture of the late antiquity, had been a creation of the western medieval civilization from where it had been adopted as far as the interference zones with the Byzantine civilization. From the 11th century, the western Lower Danube has become frontier of the Byzantine Empire, which has built up here a defensive system of fortifications²⁰⁷. During the 12th century, the southern

²⁰⁴ D. Teicu, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

²⁰⁵ Gh. Anghel, *Apulum*, 18, 1980, p. 195, A.A. Rusu, *Acta MN*, 17, 1980, p. 181; R. Popa, *IBI. Bulletin* 34, 1978, p. 60; V. Vătășianu, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

²⁰⁶ M. de Bouard, *Manuel d'archéologie médiévale : De la fouille à l'histoire*, Paris, 1975, p. 113-114; Fr. Enaud, *IBI*, 43, 1985, p. 50; A.A. Rusu, *op. cit.*, p. 181; N. Párády, *AAH*, 34, 1982, p. 131-149

²⁰⁷ M. Popović, *Balkanoslavica*, 11-12, 1984-1985, p. 11-28; idem, *Starinar*, 42, 1991, p. 171-182; M. Popović, V. Ivanisević, *Starinar*, 39, 1988, p. 126-132.

Banat was placed in a zone of interference of the interests of the Byzantine Empire, of the Hungarian Kingdom and of the Asănești Tsardom. A document issued by the papal chancellery at the beginning of 1223 was mentioning Ilidia, the fortress Cuvin, among the ownership of the empress of Byzantium. Those possessions had belonged, in 1185, to Margaret's matrimonial dowry, Bélla III's daughter, at her marriage with the Byzantine emperor Isac II Angelos²⁰⁸.

The monument from Ilidia from the 12th century had been raised up in a zone of cultural passage between the Byzantine civilization and the western one. Taking into account that the tower from Ilidia is situated in the top of series of such architectonic creations in Transylvania and Banat, the essential problem that asks an answer is to determinate the impulse that had generated this. As far as we know the monuments of the 11th-12th centuries on the Danube frontier, we agree with the attribution of the appearance of the dwelling-tower from Ilidia to the western influence. Ecclesiastic architecture had undoubtedly influenced the first creations of the architecture of fortifications.

Archaeological documentation concerning the evolution of the fortifications' architecture in southern Banat is much richer, as compared to the previous period, offering the support for general, historical conclusions. The documentary attestation of the first ban of Severin in 1223 had marked the political-military and confessional expansion of the Hungarian Kingdom in the space of the western Lower Danube. Repeated military actions would climax at the beginning of the 13th century, after 1223, by imposing effectively the new political creation - the Banat of Severin²⁰⁹. It is certain that a constructive military program in territory, which spread also in the South of Banat and which was a starting base, sustained the offensive political actions. The fortifications from Turnu Severin could offer a reference point of the constructive military program in the 13th century, instituted by the Arpadian kings in the Danube zone with the condition of more precise dating based on a surer archeological documentation, which we need for the moment. It is very probably that the fortress had not been built yet as neither the act from 1247 mentioned it when the bans of Severin had been mentioned for the first time in 1233 and 1240²¹⁰. The fortress *Erdsumlya*, which was located at Vršac, was among the first objectives raised up during the new stage of the wall architecture from the second

²⁰⁸ L. Tăutu, *Antemurale*, 3, 1956, p. 52-65; G. Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, Budapest, 1970, p. 102-119

²⁰⁹ M. Holban, *Din cronica relațiilor române-maghiare în secolele XIII-XIV*, București, 1981, p. 85-89; S. Papacostea, *Românii în secolul al XIII-lea*, București, 1993, p. 66-70, 139-142.

²¹⁰ M. Holban, *op. cit.*, p. 84-85.

half of the 13th century²¹¹. It had occupied a distinct strategic position controlling the main route that was connecting the Danube valley to the northern plain of Banat. That route was going round the hills and the mountainous zone. In the same time and measure, the fortress was situated in the neighborhood of the access ways to the north of Banat across the Ciomovăț valley and the Bârzava valley. It had been attested in documents in the 3rd decade of the 14th century. In 1335, it is mentioned the first castellan known²¹². Building it in a zone with Romanian habitations had generated invasions and dispossessions of its owners of fortress. The fortress's dungeon from Vrșac, is rectangular with 13.80/1.00 m, having besides the ground floor another two floors²¹³ (Fig. 33, A; 36).

Archaeological investigation of the fortification on the bank of the Danube at Pescari has pointed out a wall precinct built at the middle of the 13th century²¹⁴. Its wall built up directly on a flatten *vallum*, had been 2.80-3 m in thickness, had been 2.80-3 m in thickness. Its tract had followed the characteristics of the promontory where the fortification had been placed (Fig. 34). The precinct from Pescari, excepting the stone tower, had not been endowed with dungeons or any other arrangement from the interior wall. A defense ditch with 9 m in width had been built on the northern side of the precinct. Above the walls, there had been a wooden superstructure as the fragments of carbonated beams discovered by the archaeological investigation suggest. The fortress from Pescari was mentioned on a military map from the last decade of the 14th century under the name of BOLASABON (Saint Lazarus). Documents from the beginning of the 15th century name it the Saint Ladislau's (Szent Lászlóvára) fortress²¹⁵. The fortress from Pescari was controlling an important ford of the Danube, but, in the same time, it was situated between two depression zones of the Danube valley that were sheltering compact groups of Romanian settlements.

A quantitative leap of the number of fortresses documentary attested in the south of Banat took place at the beginning of the 14th century. This period points out a new superior stage of what historiography has called

²¹¹ Gy. Györffy, *op. cit.*, III, p. 493-494.

²¹² DIR, C, Veacul XIV, III, (1331-1340), p. 360-361.

²¹³ M. Petrović, GKV, 6-7, 1976, p. 53-56.

²¹⁴ St. Matei, I. Uzum, *op. cit.*, II, p. 147-150.

²¹⁵ I. Dumitru Snagov, *Țările Române în veacul al XIV-lea, Codex Latinus Parisinus*, 1979, p. 86, the citadel Balasabon, marked in the west of Osson (Orșova) on the map can be located in the passage zone of the Danube from Pescari. On the right bank of the river, in the same zone, there is the citadel CHOLOMBAZO (Golubaț).

“the process of building up fortresses in Transylvania”²¹⁶. Since the beginning of the 14th century, the fortress is led by a castellan that is frequently mentioned in the chancellery documents. Documents from 1320 certify a “*castellanus de Sydovar*”. Five years later we get known a castellan of the fortress Ildia. At the middle of the 14th century the castellan of the fortress Orșova is also mentioned²¹⁷.

Different documentary sources help to create a more shaded image of the architecture of fortifications in Banat in the 14th century. A series of Turkish narrative sources from the 17th century present medieval realities²¹⁸ from Banat. Suggestive data and pictures of these are met in medieval cartographic sources from the modern epoch, too²¹⁹. Finally, few medieval fortifications from Banat, as well as those from Mehadia, Tumu Rueni, Jdioara, Bocșa and Ildia have constituted the object of archaeological excavations of different importance²²⁰. It was natural that these sources to be scientifically valued. A natural tendency has accordingly manifested that of filling a gap that had characterized the history of medieval Romanian art. Timișoara became, during the first years of Charles Robert's (1308-1342) reign what, undoubtedly, had also influenced the program of fortification of Banat at the beginning of the 14th century. Several of the nine known fortifications had been built during that period. This fact explains a certain unity of plan and structure of these fortresses.

We notice a first group of monuments, the dwelling-towers or the dungeons, as they have been often called in historiography, whose origins we have found even in the architecture of the 12th century in Banat. The dungeon from Mehadia had been constructed on the summit of the hill Grad that had been dominating the Belareca valley in one of its gorges (Fig. 35). The construction is hexagonal with sizes of 6.50 and 7.70 m. The walls were 2.20-2.30 m in width. They had been built up of quarry stone and Roman bricks. The hexagon's corners had been made of molded blocks. In the same way, the surface of the walls had been covered with stone. The tower had a vertical structure with 15 m in height. It had a ground floor and another two floors. A brick vault, whose constructing points are still in the southwestern corner of the hexagon, had been covering the ground floor. A wooden ceiling was separating the two floors of the tower as the gaps for the ends of the beams marked in the walls suggest. The

²¹⁶ A.A. Rusu, *Cetăți din voievodatul Transilvaniei (sec. XI-XIV)*, Teză de doctorat, rezumat, p. 9; Engel Pál, *Magyarország világi archontologia. 1301-1457*, I-II, Budapest, 1996.

²¹⁷ DIR, C., XIV, 2, p. 69.

²¹⁸ *CTTR II. Extraso*. Published by M. Guboglu, București, 1974, p. 432.

²¹⁹ Gy. Sebestyén, *op. cit.*, p. 46 and following

²²⁰ St. Malei, *op. cit.*, p. 106-119.

first floor, with 6.20 m in height, had been endowed with two superposed windows. It has been considered that the tower from Mehadia had been built at the beginning of the 14th century. The arguments of the archaeological investigation corroborated with the testimonies of the chancellery documents sustain this dating²²¹. In the middle of the second decade of the 14th century, the fortification had been already built when the documents mentioned it in the centre of a dispute between the king Charles Robert and the nobles of Banat. Thus, the document on the 23rd of October 1317 proves that the *magister* Theodor de Voiteg's son had occupied the fortress²²². At the beginning of the year 1322, when the document on the 16th of March registers Dionisie Széchy as castellan of the fortresses Mehadia and Jdioara, the fortress is again under royal ownership. The fortification from Mehadia had been built by the Hungarian royalty as an outpost "to stay against the Bulgarians, against Basarab, the transalpine chieftain, against the schismatic king of Rascia and against the Tartars who were continuously invading with enmity attacking the boundaries of our kingdom", as the act from 1329 mentions²²³. The dungeon had served as nucleus of the fortifications built around it sometimes during the 4th-5th decades of the 15th century, pointed out by the archaeological investigations²²⁴ (Fig. 35). A wall precinct endowed with a defense tower had been built on the edge of the narrow and elongated summit of the hill, including a surface of 60/10 m in its axes. In the close vicinity of the dungeon, a stone tower had been raised up. Other two defense towers, built inside the precinct on the eastern and western sides while towards the south the precinct was closed by a circular tower with walls of about 2.10 m in thickness and 2.20 m in diameter. The curtain walls with 1.50 m in thickness had been adapted to the tract imposed by the ground developing an irregular plan²²⁵.

The construction from Turnu Ruieni, a huge dwelling-tower, surrounded by a defense ditch, constitutes one of the most representative monuments of this category. It had been built on the summit of a lonely hill at the foot of Mic Mt. from where it had been dominating part of the depression Caransebeş. The tower had a quadrilateral plan at its base with the interior sides of 4.60/4.80 m (Fig. 37, 38). Four massive abutments, executed in steps and disposed in a 45° angle, were sustaining the construction. Structurally, the tower had a slightly deepen ground floor, above which there were another three floors (Fig. 37). The ground floor,

²²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 112.

²²² M. Holban, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

²²³ *Ibidem*, p. 94.

²²⁴ St. Matei, *op. cit.*, p. 122; Engel P., I, 1996, p. 367.

²²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

that had no exterior entrance, was 4.30 m in height at the level of the first floor. The walls were narrowing with about 0.40 m obtaining the necessary support for the ceiling. The constructors had used the same proceeding for the second floor too with 5.80 m in height unlike the first floor that was only 4.10 m in height. At the third floor level, the beams for ceiling had traversed the tower walls obtaining the necessary support for an exterior platform. The archaeological test trench has pointed out ceramics and a coin from the king Charles Robert that constituted an argument for dating it at the beginning of the 14th century²²⁶ together with the plan analogies. A later document, from July 1467, mentions "*cuisdam turris lapidei*" among the possessions of the Romanian nobles from Mâtnic²²⁷ what has determined the attribution of this construction to the Mâtnic family. Thus, this was a nobiliary possession.

Belonging to that category of fortifications, the dwelling-towers from Svinița-*Tricule*, because of its characteristics²²⁸, they have, for the moment, a particular position that offers them a unique statute. The towers are situated at about 45 km upstream Orșova, in the boundary of the village Svinița. The Danube, in this sector of the Transcarpathian narrow path that it traverse, turns unexpectedly to north, entering the Danube Iron Gates at Cazane. From the confluence of the Tisovița valley with the river to the small basin from Dubova, there are the "Cazanele Mari" of the Danube. The mountains of the Clisura dominate the landscape climbing down to the abrupt banks of the river. Three isolated towers, located like a triangle with the point propped up in the Danube's bank, form the fortified ensemble from Svinița-*Tricule*. (Fig. 39)

Archaeological investigation had not proved the existence of the elements of fortification supposed to have existed: ditches, palisades, and curtains²²⁹. Specific architectural elements of the monuments (Fig. 39) have been pointed out. The tower constructed downstream the river had a square plan measuring 7 by 7.50 m. The other two edifices had a similar plan, but they had different size (6.70 by 6.50 m). The two towers have been kept almost entirely, with 10 and 11 m in height, and a few crenels²³⁰. The access was at the level of the first floor through a marked gap measuring 1.9 by 1 m. On the ground floor entirely closed there had been two floors. The floors had been made of wood as the gaps from walls for beams suggested.

²²⁶ St. Matei, *op. cit.*, p. 109, N. Secară, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

²²⁷ Pesty, *Szörény*, III, p. 80.

²²⁸ Th. Trăpcea, *op. cit.*, p. 45; Al. Corvătescu, Al. Rădulescu, *Tibiscus*, 5, 1979, p. 169-180; St. Matei, *op. cit.*, p. 20

²²⁹ Al. Corvătescu, Al. Rădulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 169

²³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 171-176.

A guard platform protected by crenels with merlons with gaps for pulling measuring 0.35 by 0.15-m had been on the second floor from towers. All the three towers indicate a unitary constructive program executed in one stage. The archaeological investigation from Svinița - *Tricule* has discovered metal pieces, ceramics from the 11th-13th centuries and from the next period of the 13th-14th centuries, and a Byzantine coin from Manuel the Comnen²³¹. It was considered that the towers had been built sometime during the 13th century and the first half of the 15th century. The written documents do not help to any more precise identification of this one. Among the fortifications ceded to the Teuton in 1429 by King Sigismund of Luxembourg to defense the Danube frontier, the *Castrum Zinicze* is also mentioned. The fortifications from Svinița - *Tricule* had controlled the navigation on Danube in an extremely important point. Early archaeological elements from the 12th-13th centuries constitute an element, which, in our opinion, plead for dating the fortifications at the beginning of the 13th century. Their construction can be connected to the moment of implying the Banat of Severin at the beginning of the 13th century in the dispute of the Arpadian kingdom with the Wallachian - Bulgarian Empire of the Asănești to control the zone of the Danube.

Among the Banat wall fortifications, one can distinguish a group represented by the fortresses from Bocșa, Jdioara, Pescari, Carașova and Ilidia, all royal fortresses. Their reduced dimensions had been a common characteristic. The medieval masons had exploited all the defensive advantages of the location. The limestone zone of the Banat Mountains had offered special advantages from this point of view that had been entirely valued, for the fortresses at Ilidia, Carașova and Jdioara. As for the fortress from Cuiești near Bocșa, it had been chosen a hilly spur that had been fortified. The fortress' plans had been adopted as concerns the land characteristics having oval or irregular polygonal shapes or just a curtain that had closed the access on the promontory as in the case of Ilidia. The defending power of the wall fortress had been doubled with elements of earth and wooden fortifications, defense ditches and vallum discovered at Carașova, Bocșa and Mehadia. The access ways to the fortification, as for example at Bocșa and Ilidia, had been made with natural elements that permitted the access to the summit of the hill. The walls of the fortifications are 1.70 by 1.80 m in thickness at Bocșa and Jdioara and to 2.30 m thickness at Ilidia. Using of river stone and quarry stone with mortar resulted in a very good bond. Constructive elements are known much more at the fortifications archaeologically investigated. Defense ditches in the front of the gates are met in the exterior defense structure. At the fortress from Carașova two parallel ditches had been dug in rock with 5 m in width and

²³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 175.

2 m in depth, while at Bocşa the ditch in front of the curtain was 15-20 m in width and 4 m depth. The interior towers built up in front of the gates at Bocşa, Jdioara, Mehadia, had thick walls of over 3 m for an efficient protection of the access in the fortress. The curtain walls better kept at the fortress from Bocşa are 10 m in height. These fortifications had been built especially during the 14th century and during the next century too, using the same techniques as in the case of Mehadia and even of Pescari. The elements of western military architecture, evident in the ensemble of monuments, have been already spread at the Lower Danube by the monastic military orders even during the 13th century²³². Development of the architecture of fortifications in Banat undoubtedly belonged to a larger area of the influence of the western civilization from the 13th-14th century from Transylvania²³³.

The fortress from Jdioara is located in the southwest of the mountains Poiana Ruscă, at the confluence with the valley of the Timiş River. The precinct walls, brought to light by the archaeological excavations, had been adapted to the land configuration. The fortress had a polygonal plan with slightly rounded sides²³⁴. The space within the fortification was measuring, on its axes, 40 by 22 m.. The fortification had been endowed with two inner towers located on the western side, respectively in its southwestern corner. The tower interior is square-like measuring 5 m. its role of gate-tower had determined the medieval constructors to build up walls with 3 by 3.51 m in thickness. The tower in the southeastern corner with rectangular plan (3.60 by 3.10 m) had been developed towards the interior of the precincts. The curtain on the northeastern side to 6-8 m in height is 1.80 m in thickness. The fortification from Jdioara had been a royal fortress built in the second half of the 13th century or during the first years of the 14th century²³⁵. The diploma issued in the 16th of December 1320 certifies Dionisie Széchy as castellan of Sydovar. The same character, rewarded by the king Robert for his faithful services, occupied in 1322 important functions in this zone of Banat. He had been mentioned on as castellan of Jdioara and Mehadia²³⁶. The building of the fortification from Jdioara by the Hungarian royalty is undoubtedly connected to the royal authority imposed on the Romanian feudal environment in the mountainous zone of Banat. The chancellery documents from the 14th-15th centuries certify

²³² R. Theodorescu, *op. cit.*, p. 320-321.

²³³ V. Vătăşianu, *op. cit.*, p. 262-267; Gh. Anghel, *Fortificații medievale de piatră din secolele XIII-XIV*, Cluj-Napoca, 1986, p. 48-59; M. Popović, *Balkanoslavica*, 11-12, 1984-1985, p. 11 and following.

²³⁴ A. Bejan, *op. cit.*, p. 202-203.

²³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 202.

²³⁶ M. Holban, *op. cit.*, p. 93, 97.

the existence of a Romanian district of Caran in this zone of the Timiș valley. The fortress from Jdioara had probably become the military center of the Romanian district Caran²³⁷.

Archaeological investigations from Bocșa have offered information concerning the medieval fortress of Cuiești, located on the middle course of the Bârzava river (Fig. 41). The fortress had an irregular polygonal plan measuring in interior 29 by 32-m. On the northern side of the polygon, the foundations of an interior tower measuring 4.50 by 4.30 m have been investigated. The walls of the tower had been built of blocks of quarry stone measuring 3.20 m in thickness, the same as the walls of the precinct. It has been appreciated that the square tower located in the access way had played the role of gate tower²³⁸. The fortress had also another tower located in the northeastern corner (Fig. 40). As external defensive elements, the fortification had a ditch of 15 by 20 m in width and 4 m in depth, closing the access from the summit of the hill. The fortification from Bocșa had been identified with the help of the documents as the royal fortress Cuiești, documented during the 14th-15th centuries. Its location in a Romanian zone is connected to the existence and the exploitation of the iron ores from the Dognecea Mountains. It has also been proved that the fortification from Bocșa can not be identified with the fortress of Bârzava, which has to be located somewhere on the upper course of the Bârzava River²³⁹. The partial investigation of the fortification from Socolari - Cetate has pointed out few plane elements of this. The fortress had been built on a limestone zone, 656 m in height, dominating the southeastern side of the Oravița Depression. The constructors had exploited the advantages of the rocky promontory measuring on axes 180 by 90 m. It closed the western side, the only accessible one, with a wall (Fig. 42). The curtain wall with 2.30 m in thickness, made of unshaped quarry stone was 70 m in length. Two towers had flanked the extremities of the wall. The tower from the northern edge, discovered by the archaeological investigation was square-shaped measuring 5 by 3 m. The way of some constructions in the limestone plateau, as well as a rectangular well measuring 4 by 5 m and 5 m in depth²⁴⁰ have been identified from the intern structure of the fortress. The fortification from Socolari - Cetate was identified with the ruins of the medieval fortress Ilidia, mentioned in the diplomatic sources at the beginning of the 14th century. The boundaries of the domain of the fortress Ilidia are hardly established because of the lacunal character of information. Thus,

²³⁷ R. Popa, *SCIVA*, 40. 4, 1989, p. 360 and note 34; Engel P., *MVA*, I, 1996, p. 467, sustains that the fortification from Jdioara was the centre of the district Lugoj.

²³⁸ D. Teicu, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 23; Engel P., *MVA*, I, p. 352.

²⁴⁰ D. Teicu, *Banatica*, 9, 1987, p. 335 and fig. 13.

the village Rusova, on the lower course of the Vicinic, mentioned in a document from 1321 (*villes seu possessiones Mathelec, Patrugh et Orozy in comitatu de Elyed*) marks out a point in the western extremity of the boundary. The valleys of Vicinic and Ciclova, down from the Anina Mountains, constituted the core of the domain to north and northeast there had been the fortress of Caraș on the boundary, and the fortress *Erdsumlow* in the zone of the Caraș Plain. The investigation of the ruins of the fortress Caraș, located within the boundaries of Carașova have remained beyond the interest of the medieval archaeology by now.

The fortress of Caraș borrowed its name from the homonym river that springs out from the Mounts Anina traversing then the mountainous and hilly space in the south of Banat. The ruins of the stone fortification occupy a rocky spur that dominates the entrance at the Caraș Gorges (Fig. 43). As we have already mentioned, in lack of archaeological investigations, a series of matters concerning the planimetry of the monument and its chronology remain without any answer. The tract of the walls suggests that the fortification plan had been adapted to the land characteristics exploiting the natural advantages. The defense ditches that blocked the only way of access towards the interior of the fortress are remarked among the exterior elements of fortification. Two parallel ditches had been dug in the limestone rock. The former was 7 to 9 m in width, and the latter was 10 to 15 m in width and 2m in depth. The interior space of the fortification was an irregular polygon with the sides measuring between 20 to 40 m and with extreme sizes of 50 by 35 m²⁴¹. A precinct wall with 32 m in length had bounded the northern extremity of the promontory while the western side had been close with a wall in front of the defense ditches. There is still a wall of 20 m in length. It is very probable that there had been a gate-tower in the northwestern zone. Its characteristics can not be specified. The southwestern corner of the precinct wall broke down in the Caraș valley. There is still just an oblique wall of about 25-m in length. The walls had been built up of limestone with mortar and they were 1.75 to 3.20m's in thickness²⁴². A round pit of a well is still visible and it measures 4.75 m in diameter, dug in the limestone rock at 10m in the south of the northern curtain of the fortification. The moment when this stone fortification in the mountainous zone of Banat had been built can be appreciated only on the basis of the information from the diplomatic sources. The attestation, in 1323, of a castellan of *Erdsumlow* and Caraș proves that the fortress had been already built at that moment²⁴³. The fortress of Caraș had

²⁴¹ Th. Trăpcea, *op. cit.*, p. 62, gives erroneous sizes and an inexacte plan of the ruins.

²⁴² St. Matoi, *op. cit.*, p. 115

²⁴³ Gy. Györffy, *op. cit.*, p. 489; Engel P., *MVA*, I, p. 367.

belonged in 1335 to the archbishop of Caloccea, while another document mentions it as a royal fortress in 1358²⁴⁴.

The medieval fortification from Caransebeș has constituted by now in a less measure the objective of the historical and archaeological investigation. The reconstitution of the royal fortress during the 13th-14th centuries has been done on the basis of the plans from the 17th-18th centuries. Thus, plans from the first half of the 17th century have proved that the wall fortress from the 13th-14th centuries had a polygonal plan with 8 by 10 sides²⁴⁵ (Fig. 43/A). An exterior rectangular tower is marked on one of the sides. Evlia Celebi's description of the fortress of Caransebeș from the middle of the 17th century renders the initial nucleus as "a powerful interior fortress, in five comers, firmly built"²⁴⁶. To establish the construction period of the initial nucleus and the stages of evolution of the fortress during the 14th-15th centuries remains a desideratum of the future archaeological investigations.

Archaeological investigations from Pescari and Mehadia have offered documentation for the knowledge of the evolution of the fortifications' architecture in Banat during the 14th-15th centuries. The capacity of defense of the fortress from Pescari had been strengthened by an interior precinct endowed with flank towers and interior towers²⁴⁷. Its plan had been adapted to the natural structure of the hill that dominated the narrow path of the Danube. The walls of the interior precinct had been 2.80 by 3.00 m in thickness. A cylindrical tower with a massive wall measuring 5 m in thickness had been built up in the southeastern corner of the precinct to flank the entrance gate. In the middle of the northern side, a flank tower polygon-shaped in exterior and square-shaped in interior had been built. The northeastern corner of the precinct had been endowed with a square tower with one of the corners towards the exterior. The west wall of the precinct had been endowed with two towers. The tower from the southwestern corner had bigger sizes (7.25 by 4.10-m). About 8 m in height of the tower has left up. The archaeological material confirms that the interior precinct of the fortress from Pescari had been built during the king Sigismund of Luxembourg's reign²⁴⁸. But, the written documents mention the rebuilding

²⁴⁴ DIR, C, XIV, III (1331-1340), p. 361 *"the magister Thouka of Ersumtya and of Carașova his castellan"*, Pesty Fr., Krassó, III, p. 33.

²⁴⁵ Gh. Sebestyen, *O pagină din istoria arhitecturii României, Renașterea*, București, 1987, p. 96 and fig. 170, Gh. Anghel, *Cetăți medievale din Transilvania*, București, 1972, p. 119 and 120, with a plan from the beginning of the 17th century; R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 361-363; Engel P., *MVA*, I, 1996, p. 407 identifies the dunjeon from Turnu-Ruieni with the citadel of Caransebeș.

²⁴⁶ *Călător*, VI, București, 1976, p. 534.

²⁴⁷ St. Matei, I. Uzun, *op. cit.*, p. 149-151

²⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 154.

of the fortress from Pescari in 1428. It had played an important role in the defense system from the Danube at the end of the 14th century, in the same time with the increasing of the Ottoman danger. A military map from the end of the 14th century executed for the king Sigismund of Luxembourg renders the fortress under the name *BOLASABON*, located west of Orșova²⁴⁹.

Some fortifications along the Danube from Orșova, Drencova, Dubova, Liborajadea, Pojejena have remained outside the sphere of interest of the medieval archaeology. The Danube's waters had covered the ruins of the fortifications from Orșova, Drencova (Fig. 44), Dubova and Pojejena, the only known information coming from the chancellery acts²⁵⁰. The fortress Peth, mentioned documentary at the beginning of the 15th century has been identified in the boundary of the settlement Dubova²⁵¹. The ruins of a probably hexagonal tower are still visible on the summit of a hill on the bank of the Danube²⁵². The fortress Drencova, documentary certified in 1451, was located in the eastern extremity of the depression Liubcova of the Danube²⁵³. Another medieval fortress Liborajadea has been located in the same depression zone of the river. Its existence is registered in the documentary sources in the first half of the 15th century²⁵⁴. The fortress Pojejena, documentary mentioned in 1437, is located at the eastern extremity of the depression from Moldova Veche.

The fortress Bârzava, still unidentified in the ground is located in the interior of the mountainous zone of the Southern Banat. A document from 1370 certifies the existence of some villages around the royal fortress Bârzava. The castellans of the royal fortress had been registered in 1418 and 1452 by the occasion of some knezial meetings that had taken place in the district Bârzava. The boundaries and the domain of the fortress are supposed to be in the zone of the superior course of the Bârzava, taking into account the lacunal information of the written sources²⁵⁵.

²⁴⁹ I.D. Snagov, *op. cit.*

²⁵⁰ E. Bujor, *In memoriam Constantin Daicoviciu*, Cluj, 1974, p. 62 and following, a synthesis of the archaeological information about Orșova where it is mentioned that the medieval citadel has remained unidentified.

²⁵¹ The citadel has been mentioned since 1439 as "*castrum Peech*", Csánki D., *op. cit.*, II, p. 14; Pesty Fr., *Szövény*, II, p. 441-442; St. Matei, *Banatica*, 5, p. 979, p. 258; Engel P., *MVA*, I, p. 391.

²⁵² Th. Trápcea, *StB*, 1, 1969, p. 44-45; D.V. Rosetti, *Drobeta*, 1, 1976, p. 147-153, where he mentions traces of fortifications even since the 13th century.

²⁵³ Csanki D., *op. cit.*, II, p. 89; Pesty Fr., *Krassó*, II, 1, p. 314

²⁵⁴ Csanki D., *op. cit.*, II, p. 96.

²⁵⁵ Pesty Fr., *Krassó*, III, p. 96-99, "*villa Petri, fili Balk in pertinenciis Borzafaw*".

A.



B.

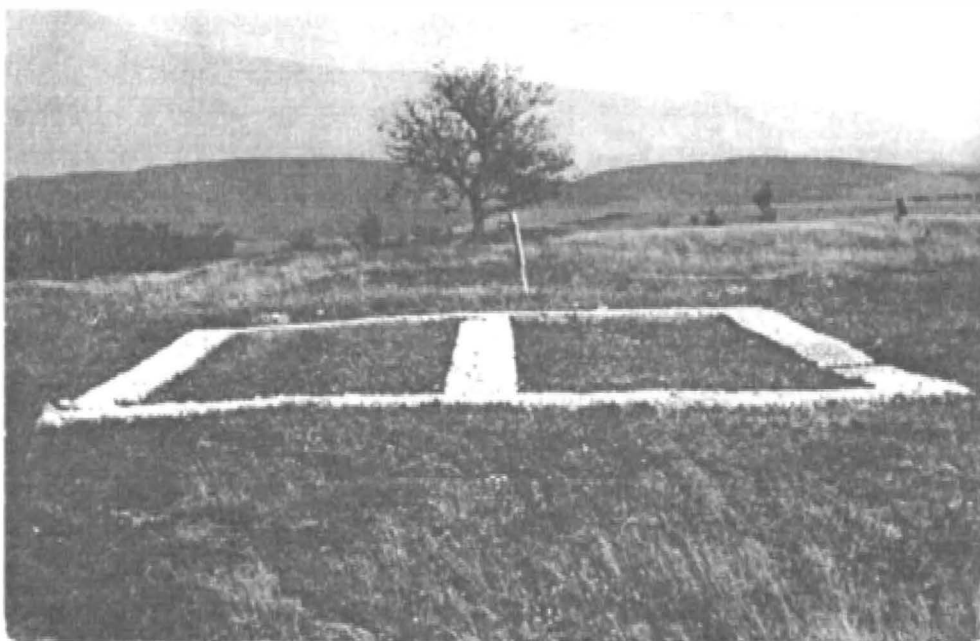
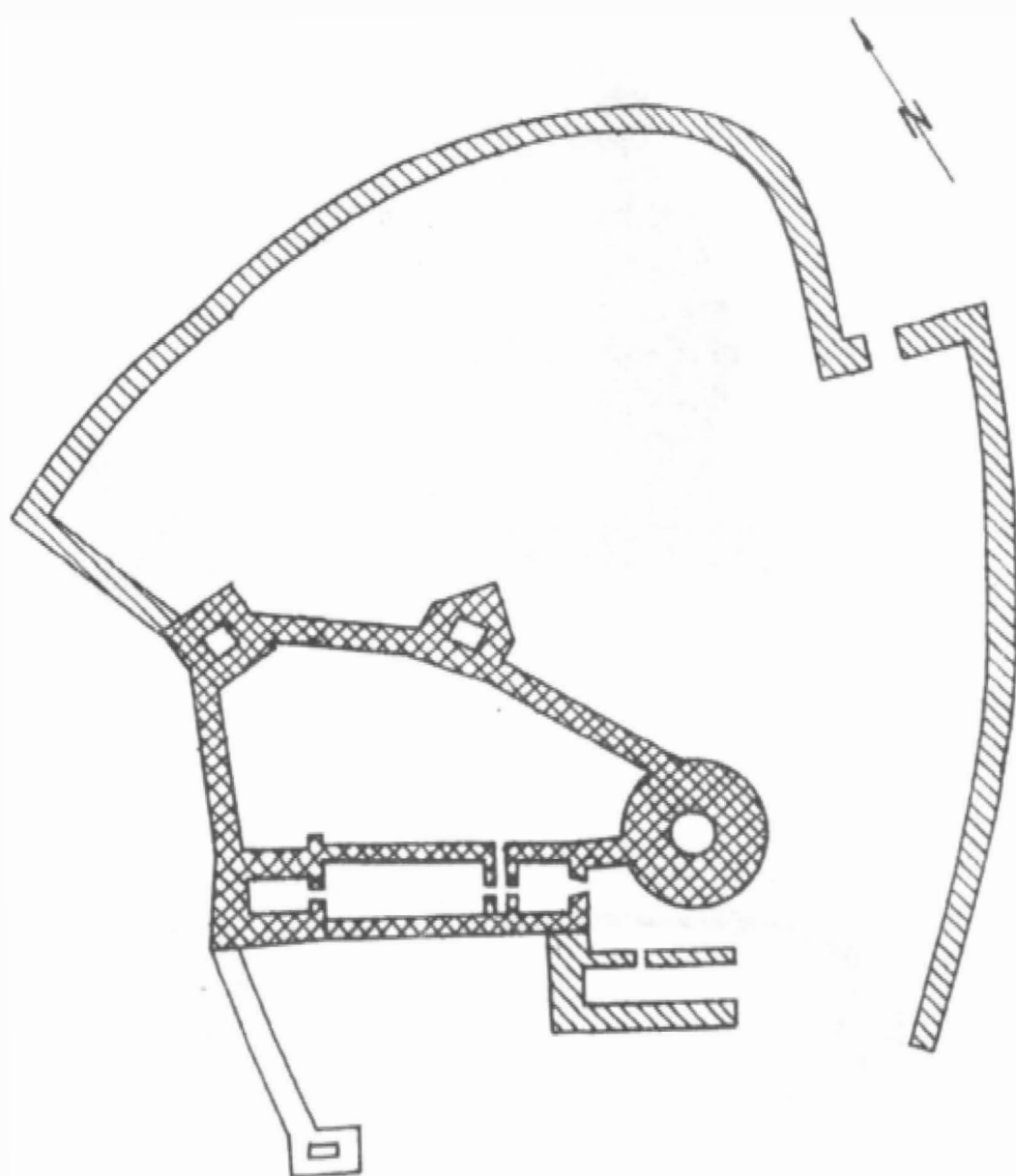


Fig. 33. A. Vrșac – *Culă* (15th century); B. Ilidia – *Oblița*. Dwelling-tower (12th century). Plan and aspect, after conservation.

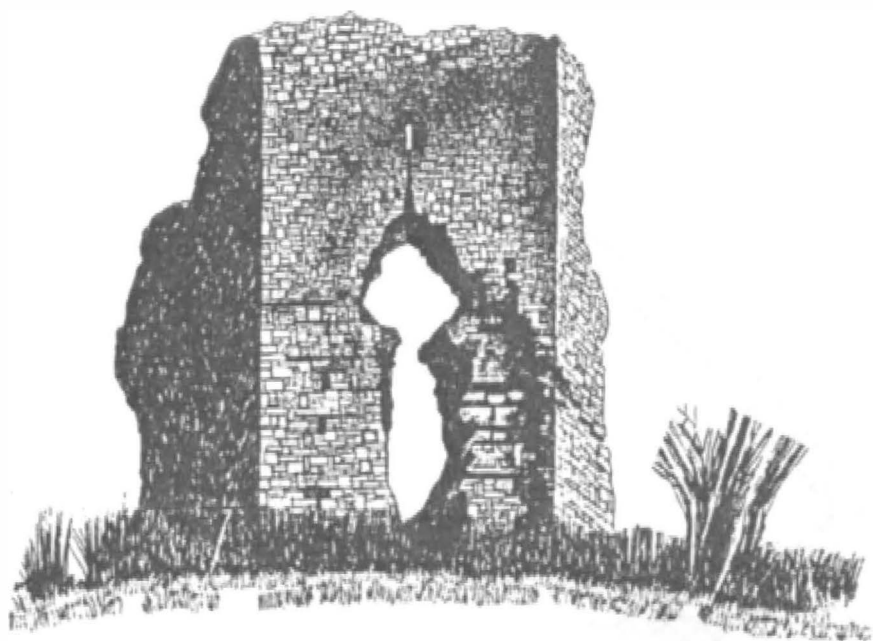


I (13th century)

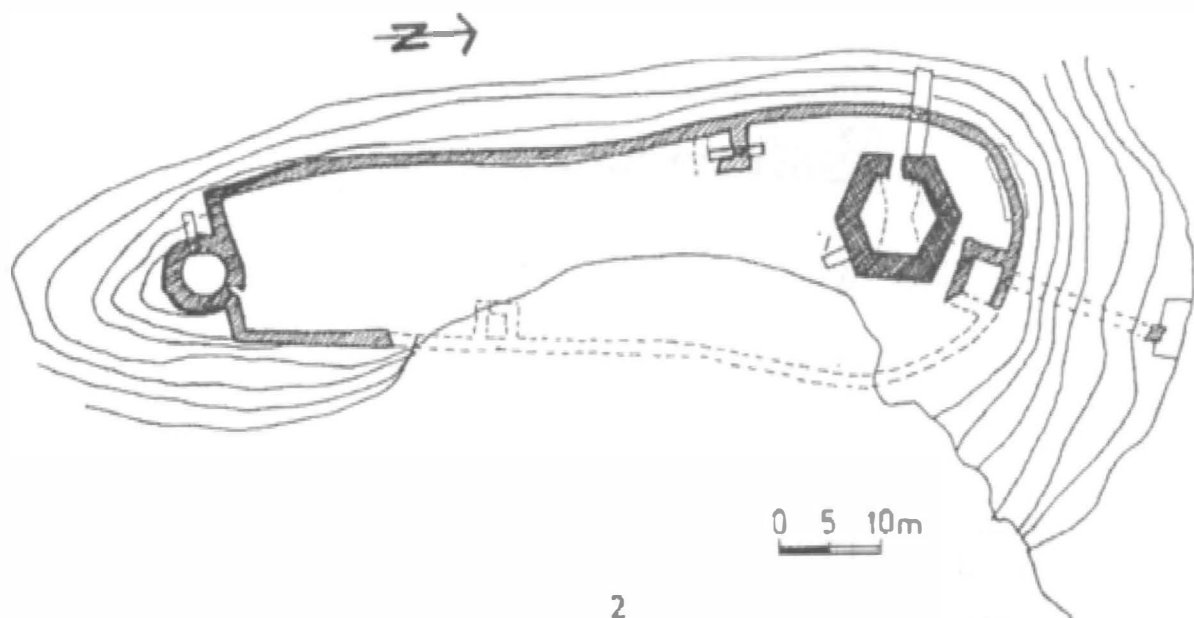


II (1428)

Fig. 34. Plan of the fortification from Pescari (13th –15th centuries).



1



2

Fig. 35. Mehadia. 1. Dwelling-tower (14th century);
2. Location of the fortification.

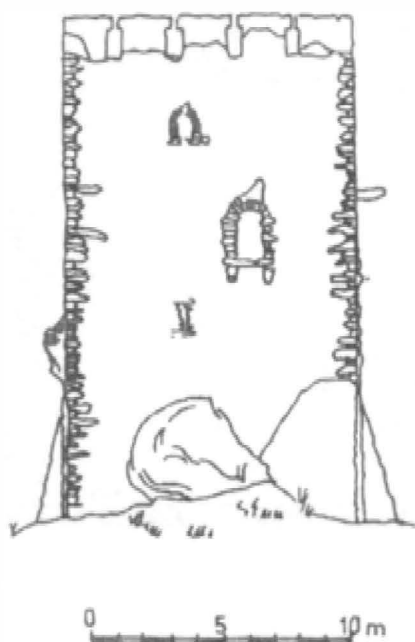
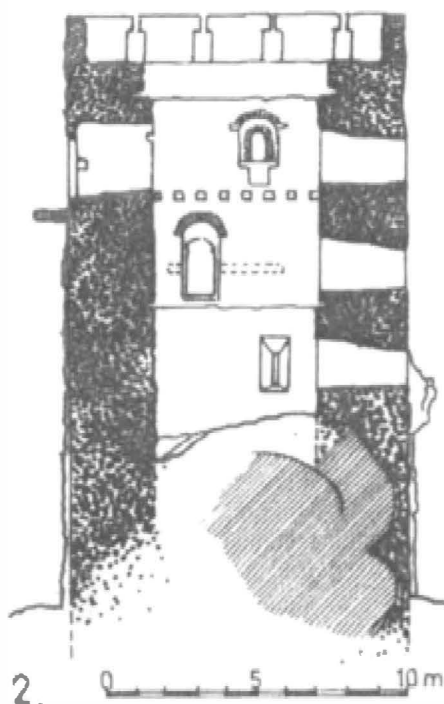
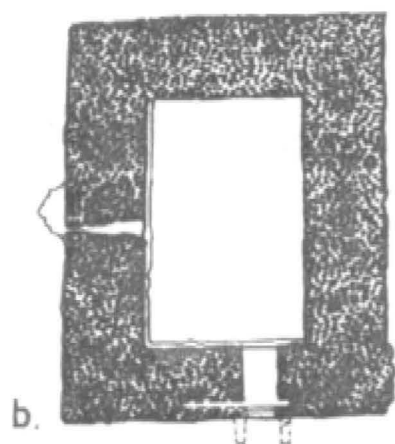
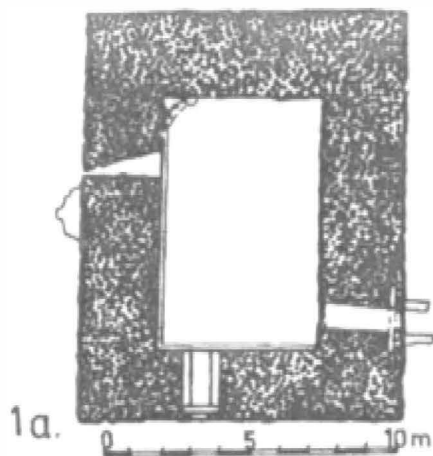


Fig. 36. Vršac. Plan, perspective and sections of the dwelling-tower (according to M. Petnić).

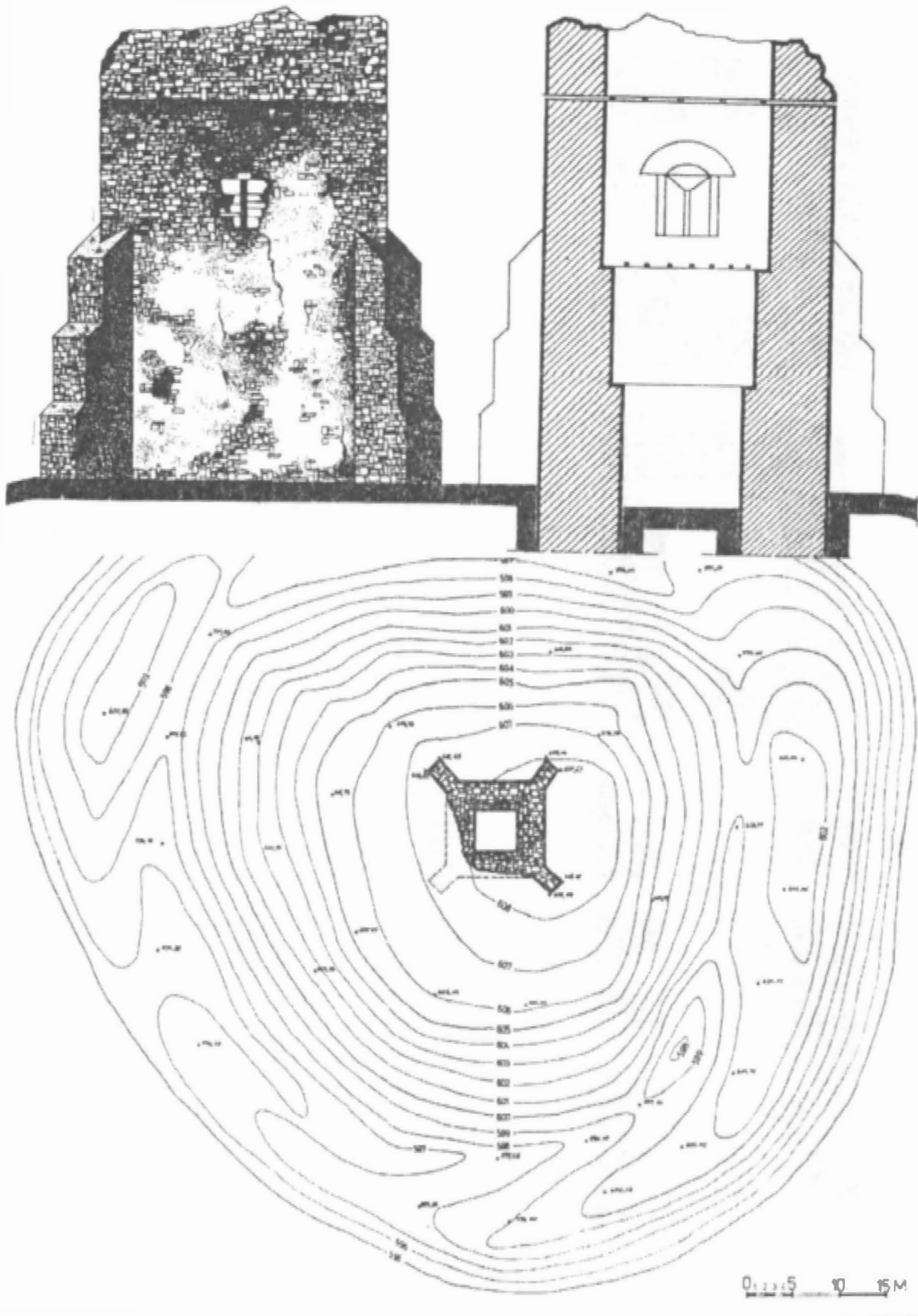
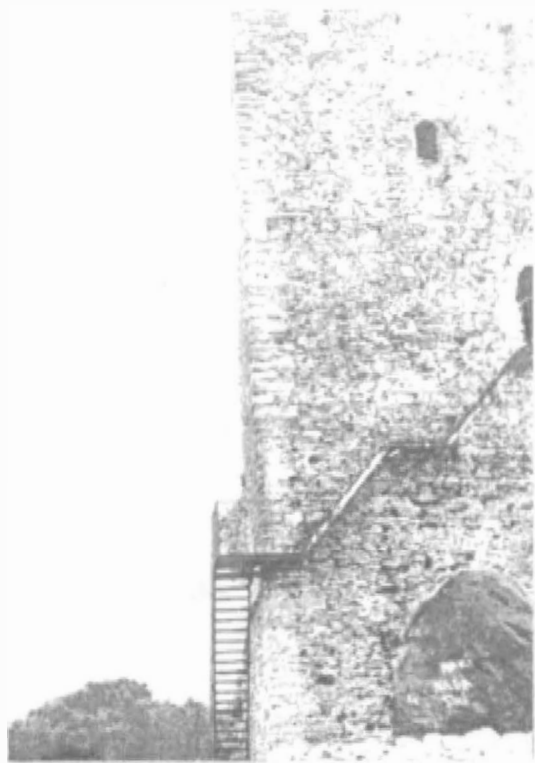


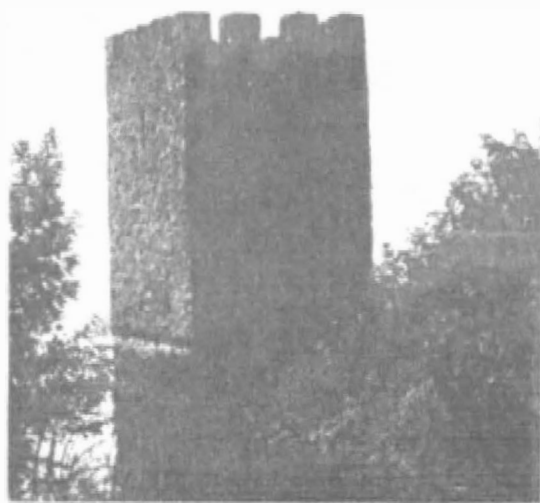
Fig. 37. Turnu Rueni. Location of the fortification.
View and sections of the dungeon (14th century).



Fig. 38. Dungeons from Banat. Turnu Ruieni.

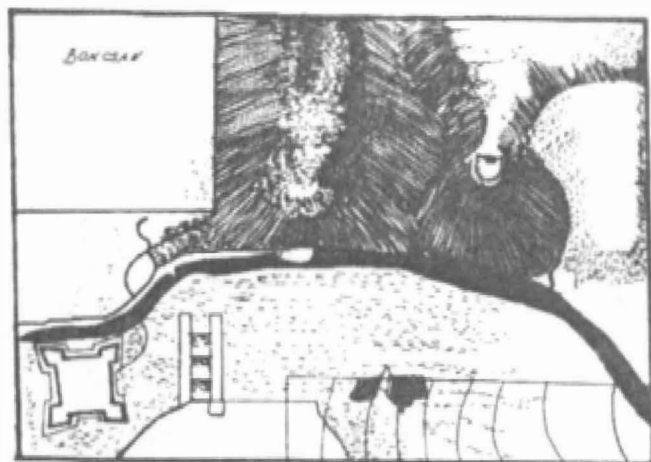


1.

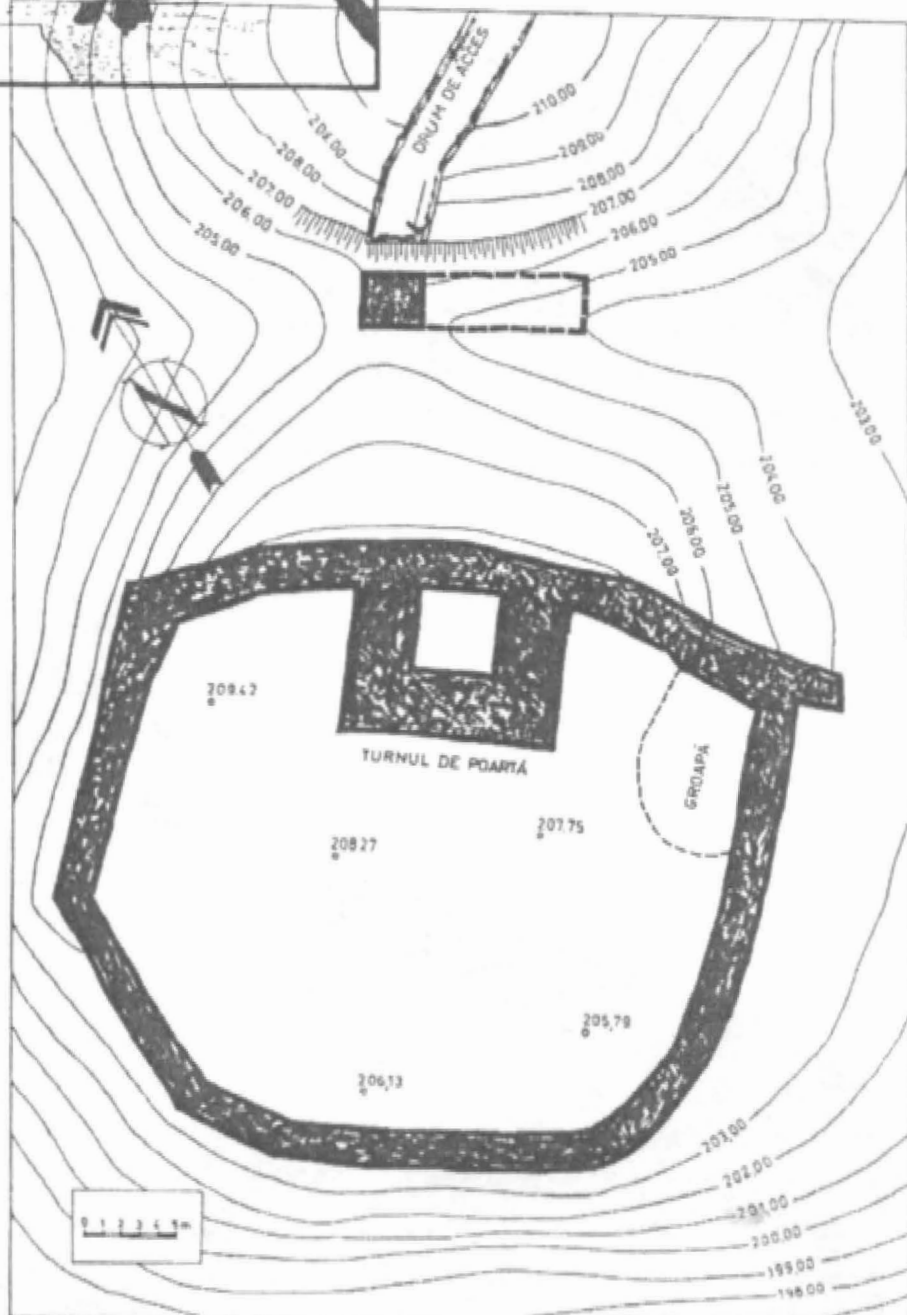


2.

Fig. 39. 1. Vrșac – Culă. 2. Svinița. Dwelling-towers.



A



B

Fig. 40. Bocșa. A. Plan of the citadel Cuiesti (14th –15th centuries) according to L.F. Marsigli; B. Plan of the citadel.

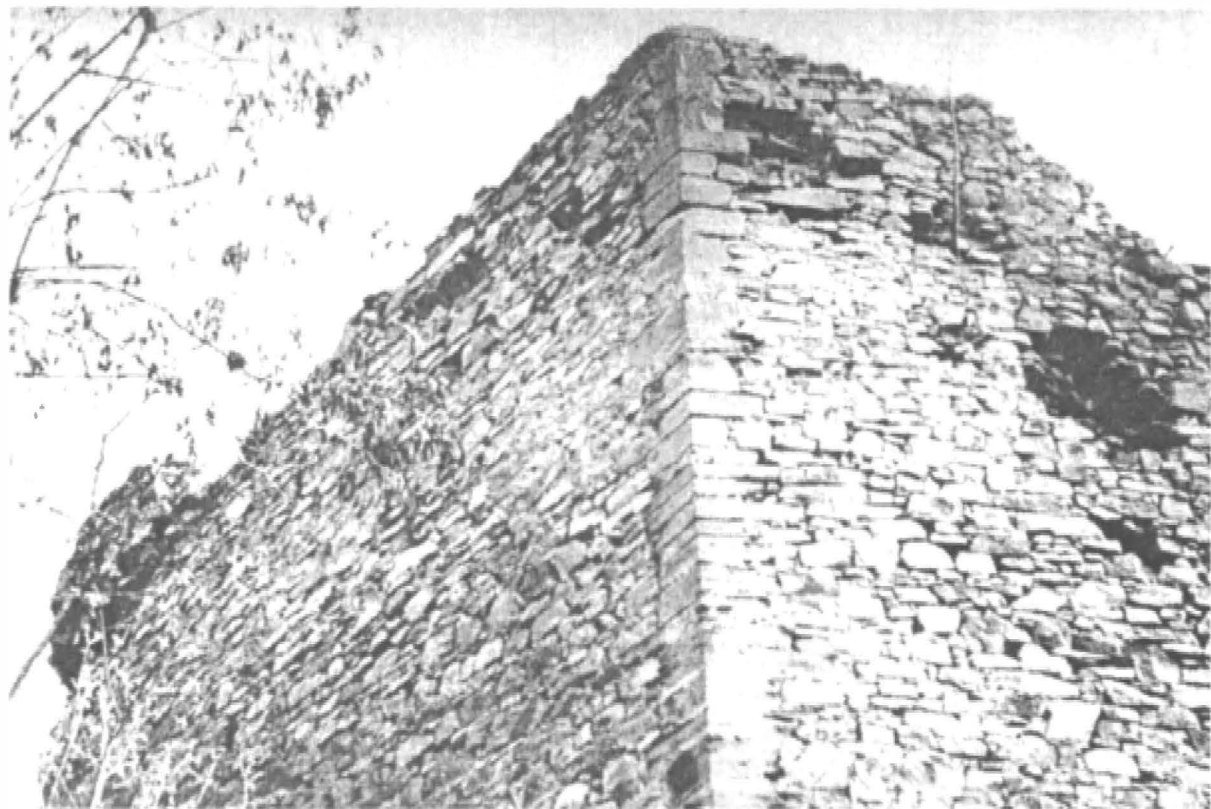


Fig. 41. Medieval fortification from Bocșa – the curtain wall.

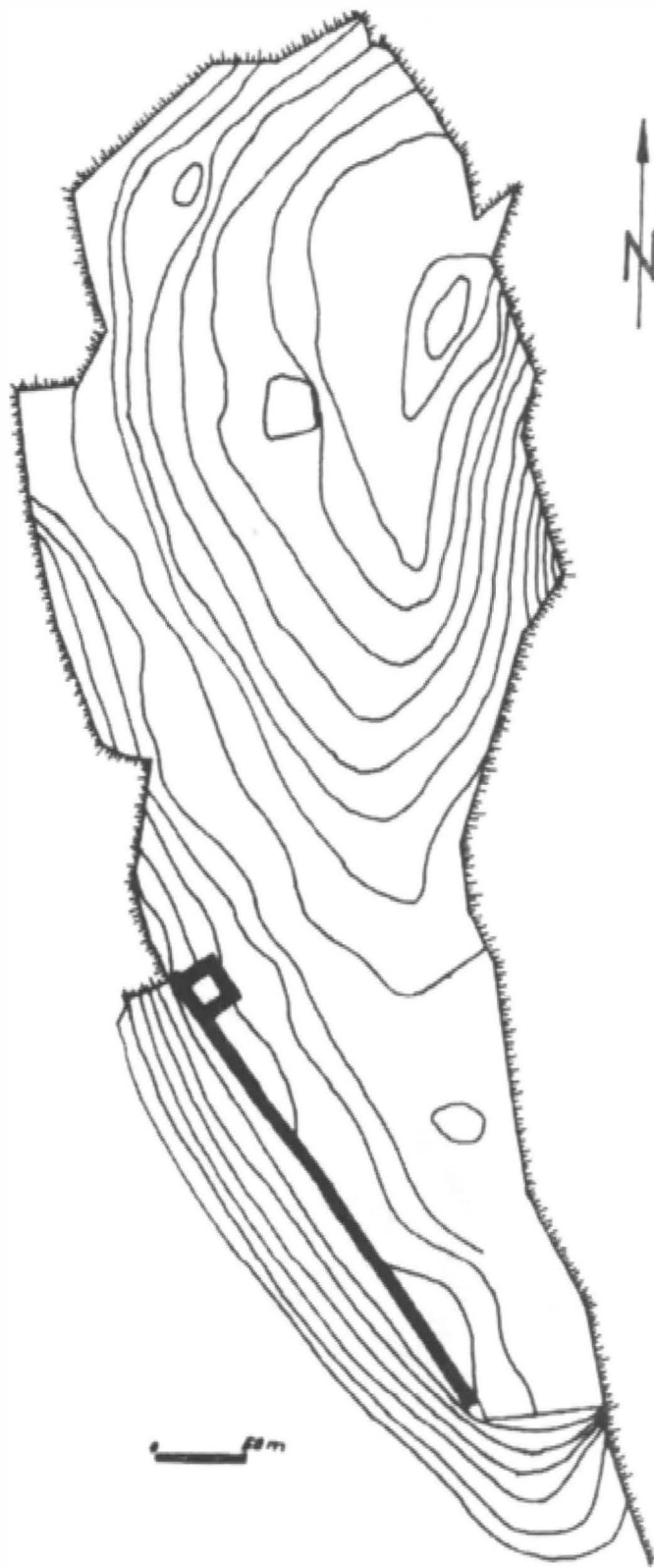


Fig. 42. Socolari. Location of the citadel Ilidia (14th –15th centuries).

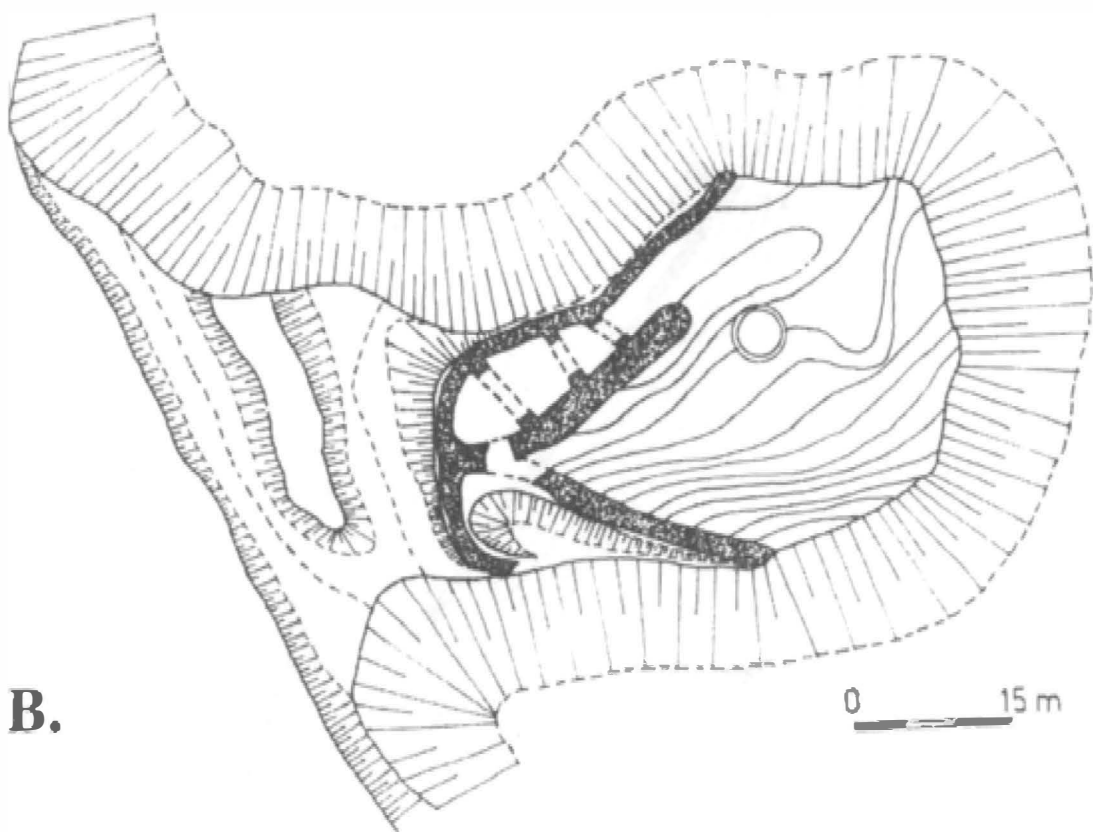
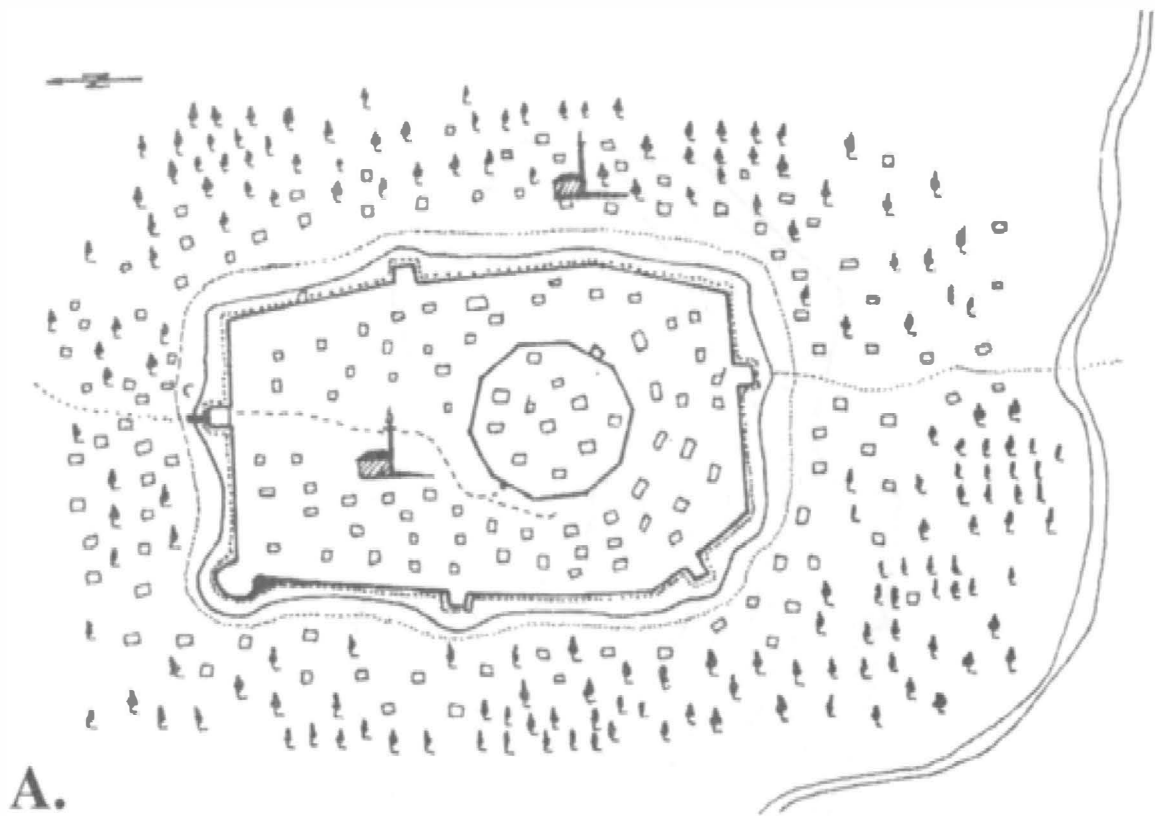


Fig. 43. A. The city and citadel of Caransebeș in the first half of the 17th century (according to G. Sebestyen);
 B. Carașova – plan of the ruins of the citadel Caraș.

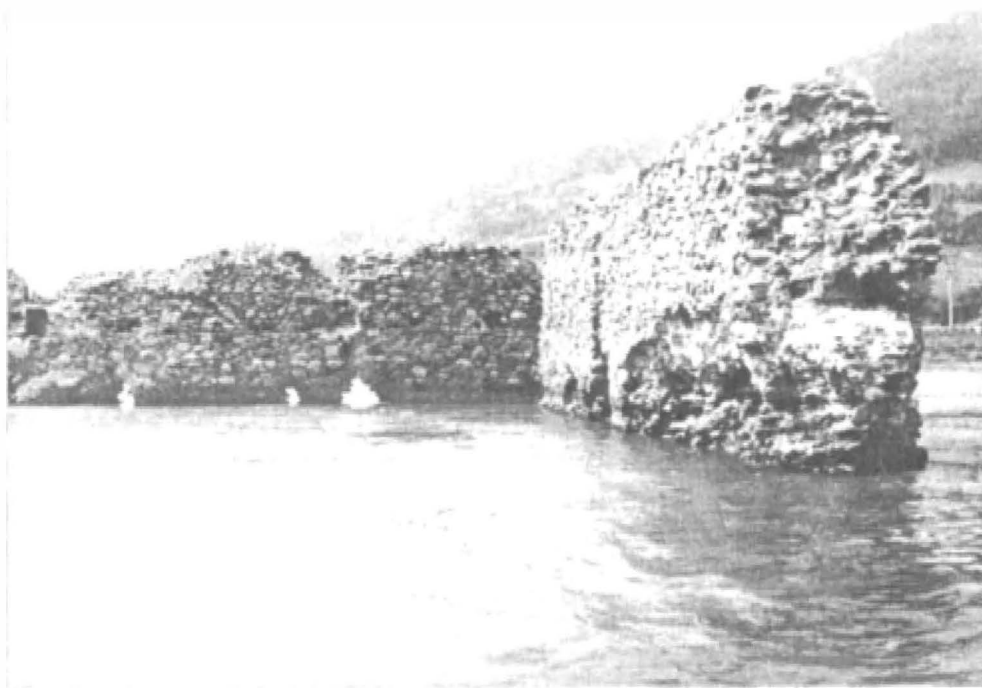
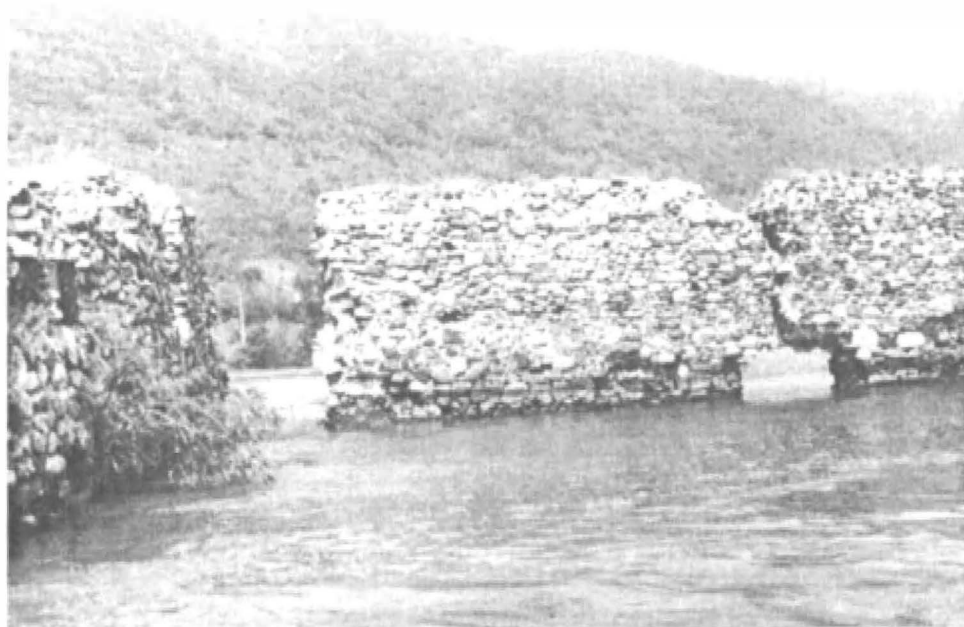


Fig. 44. Drencova. 15th century citadel.

IV. HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE 13TH – 15TH CENTURIES MOUNTAINOUS BANAT

1. Researches of Historical Geography and Medieval Archaeology

Reconstitution of the historical geography of the mountainous Banat can only be the result of interdisciplinary researches, cumulating the data gathered by historical research of the settlements and by means of the medieval archaeology. The interdependence between historical geography and medieval archaeology had already been emphasized in the European historiography¹. Reconstitution of the medieval cultural landscape (*mittelalterliche Kulturlandschaften*) is the primary objective of a historical and geographical research. This goal can only be achieved by corroboration of information offered by both historical research and medieval archaeology². Emphasizing the influence of the relief and water upon settlement's type, population and economy is no easy a task and implies interdisciplinary researches. The written sources and medieval archaeology play a primary role in constructing the historical geography of an area³.

A reconstitution of the 13th – 15th century historical geography of the Hațeg Country, in the vicinity of the mountainous Banat, had emphasized the absolute necessity for interdisciplinary researches. Radu Popa had noticed that constructing the medieval map of Hațeg, on the basis of written information only implies a certain risk and approximation, as long as these historical sources are not confronted to exhaustive studies of medieval archaeology⁴. The following attempt to reconstitute the historical geography of the mountainous Banat is backed by the information from the written sources and the accumulated archaeological documentation regarding the settlements. Its goal is to emphasize the role and proportion of the Romanian element within the medieval habitat from Banat. The reconstitution of historical geography had so far used the written information exclusively. This methodology had eliminated from the map entire areas and settlements. The medieval archaeology researches from the last two decades had equally enriched the database on the medieval habitat and

¹ H. Jäger, *ZfAM*, 6, 1978, p. 7. D. Denecke, *ZfAM*, 3, 1975, p. 7-11; K. Fehn, *BDL*, 116, 1980, p. 330-346

² D. Denecke, *op.cit.*, p. 7-10. H. Jäger, *op.cit.*, p. 7-8.

³ H. Jäger, *op.cit.*, p. 9-21.

⁴ R. Popa, *Țara Hațegului*, p. 78

had nuanced the historical information on the oldness of the Banat villages⁵.

To follow the history of the Banat villages during the 13th and 14th centuries, as recorded in the written sources means to answer some essential questions concerning the number of settlements and the age of each one. The size, internal structure and boundaries can be defined, in a measure determined by the data from the historical sources. Some of the problems concerning the Banat medieval village, such as structures and buildings in the heart of the village, structure of the house and household and economy had already been dealt with⁶. Accordingly, we will deal only with matters concerning identification and location of the Banat villages, defining of territorial boundaries and juridical system. The chancellery documents offer unequal information regarding the settlements from southern Banat. The peripheral areas, i.e. the plains around the Banat hills had entered the Hungarian kingdom's field of interest much earlier than the inner area of the mountainous Banat. Consequently, for these plain area, information on the settlements and their regime were recorded as early as the beginning of the 14th century, while for the villages in the Almăj Depression for example, historical sources are offering information starting only with the second half of the 15th century. The most representative case is that of the Bârzava Valley. The information on the settlements from the middle course of the river, where the Himfy family's domain was located is rich and diverse thanks to a large archive that had been preserved⁷. On the other hand, the settlements on the upper course, on the skirts of the Semenik Mountains had entered the attention of the royal chancellery only at mid 14th century. A special signification bear the two documents, dated 1377 – 1378 and 1389, concerning the parting of the Remetea – Ersig domain between the members of the powerful Himfy family. These acts have recorded the number of villages, mills and serf families on the domain⁸.

The Turkish documents from mid 16th century, although referring to another time span than the topical one, hold also important information regarding the existent and deserted settlements and even the number of inhabitants from certain villages. They do represent, from this point of view, an important source concerning the Banat habitat at from the end of the 15th century⁹.

The 1332 – 1337 lists of papal taxes, the so-called *Figures of the*

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 90-98.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 225-235.

⁷ For the Banat archives see C. Feneşan, *DMB*, p. 16-17.

⁸ DRH, C, XIII, p. 571; Pesty, Krassó, III, p. 185-191.

⁹ T. Halasi Kun, *AO*, X, 1985, p. 103-117; Idem, *AO* XI, 1986, p. 77-211; Engel Pál, *A Temesvári és Moldovai szandszak törökkori települései (1554-1579)*, Szeged, 1996.

papal tax collectors, represent a source that had been many times utilized for the reconstitution of historical geography concerning the Hungarian kingdom¹⁰. They held an inventory of the villages with Catholic population, structured according to deans and bishoprics. The mention of the settlements recorded as Catholic parishes offers data significant for ethnical structure of the Banat habitat. Although considered an extremely important source for the first half of the 14th century, certain objections regarding the value of the information have been formulated¹¹.

The medieval archeology represents a fundamental source in reconstituting the historical geography of the mountainous Banat. The systematic excavations in the heart of the medieval villages from Gornea and Ilidia and the contemporaneous necropolises had offered firsthand information on the oldness of the medieval settlements.

The corroboration of the information from the written sources with the archaeological documentation reduces the uncertainty of reconstitution, by offering indices regarding settlements that had been relatively late recorded in the chancellery documents. The surface collection sensibly improves the chances to identify and locate the deserted medieval settlements and proves the mobility of the heart of medieval settlements¹².

Attempts to reconstitute the historical geography of the southern Banat had been made as early as the end of the 19th century, by representatives of the positivist Hungarian historiography. The Hungarian historian Pesty Frigyes had concomitantly edited documents regarding the Caraș county and the Severin Banat and built a historical geography of these regions. This work represents an analysis of the mountainous Banat region, but taking into consideration the evolution of certain settlements until the 18th century. The works of this scholar have been part of a large program, financed and coordinated by the Hungarian Academy. The monographs of the settlements, alphabetically ordered according to the Hungarian name, had used as primary information the diplomatic sources edited by the same author¹³. Location and identification of some settlements had been done according to data gathered by using questionnaires and inevitable errors had appeared in the location of certain deserted settlements.

The south Banat historical regions are also referred to in Csánki

¹⁰ DIR, C, 14th century, III, p. 129 seq

¹¹ Gy. Györfly, *AH*, 6, 1959, p. 165.

¹² R. Popa, *op.cit.*, p. 80, on the evolution and transformations of the medieval habitat that are not always recorded in the written sources.

¹³ Pesty Fr., *Krassó vármegye története*, II, Budapest, 1884; idem, *A Szörény Bánság és Szörény vármegye története*, II, Budapest, 1878

Deszö's *Historical Geography of Hungary* published in 1913¹⁴. The author had brought new data regarding the oldness of some settlements and the patrimonial relations. Still, reserves have been expressed concerning the methodology of interpreting documentation and certain aspects of the reconstitution of historical geography¹⁵.

A prominent representative of the German historiography from Banat has been Felix Milleker. In 1915, he had published *The Medieval Historical Geography of the Territories in Southern Banat*¹⁶. He had used the information from the sources published by Pesty Fr. and Csánki D. His knowledge on the Banat area proved to be extremely useful in locating certain settlements.

The Romanian historiography in the period between the two World Wars and even today does not record any attempts toward a new approach of the medieval geography of Banat. Still, foreign historians had made recent approaches of the historical geography of Banat. Accordingly, the third volume of *The Historical Geography of Hungary during the Arpad Period* includes the Caraş County¹⁷. The volume includes an introductory part concerning the history of the Caraş County from the end of the 9th century until 14th century, its connections to the neighboring areas and the patrimonial relations within the county¹⁸. From the very beginning one has to mention the contribution brought by the author by publishing unknown chancellery acts, enabling a new chronological perspective upon certain settlements¹⁹. The work also benefits modern elements in reconstituting the medieval geographic landscape, the routes in the Caraş County connecting the Danube basin and the northern Banat area. The upper limit of the reconstitution is represented by the 1332 – 1337 list of the papal tax collector, which is considered an extremely important source. Radu Popa had extensively analyzed the limits of the work, originating in the overuse of this source and historical conception, so that we will not insist upon this matter²⁰. One should mention still another methodological problem, that has roots are in the persistent conception of the Hungarian historiography, according to which the Romanians had populated the Banat as late as the 14th century.

The attempts of historical geography reconstitution for the mid 16th

¹⁴ Csánki Deszö, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*, II, Budapest, 1913.

¹⁵ Gy. Györffy, *AH*, 6, 1959, p. 167; R. Popa, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

¹⁶ B. Milleker, *Délmagyarország középkori földrajza*, Timişoara, 1915, p. 46-270.

¹⁷ Gy. Györffy, *Az Árpád-kori Magyarország történelmi földrajza*, III, Budapest, 1987.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 469-476.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 477-493.

²⁰ Radu Popa, *Ţara Haţegului*, p. 81.

century proposed by T. Halasi-Kun and Engel Pál for the southern Banat area offer elements of support for the knowledge of habitat and demography during the 15th century. The research of a segment of the Banat area – the Comiat District, had resulted in prolegomena to a reconstitution of historical geography using both written information and field documentation²¹.

The main problem of any work of historical geography is the geographical identification of a settlement, as close as possible to the written information²². The reconstitution of the historical geography of the 13th – 15th centuries Banat had to face some obstacles created by the gaps in written sources and a certain mobility of the medieval habitat, emphasized by the field researches. There are no cadastral records of the settlements from the cited period, to delimitate the heart of the villages and their boundaries. The earliest cartographic records of such type are dated to the 18th century and had been realized by the Austrian topographers. The plan of the village Ersig presents the location of the households and lots from before the Austrian systematization, still preserving the medieval aspect of the settlement. The field researches had recorded on the Bârzava Valley, in the Berzovia - Gherteniş - Şoşdea area dwelling traces indicating the location medieval settlement hearts within the narrow space of the valley, some 3 or 4 km in-between. The same situation had been recorded on the valleys of the Vicinic and Ciclova creeks from the Oraviţa Depression. The written information indicates for the same areas a high density of settlements, but their precise location in the absence of specific toponymy is a difficult task.

2. Distribution and Density of the Medieval Banat Villages

The geographic environment had always had a decisive role in the location and distribution of the settlements.

The archaeological data, together with the data from the written sources offers, for the southern Banat area, significant information in this respect. The archaeological information is extremely important for the 13th – 14th centuries, for which the written information is missing or is lacunal. Especially useful for the knowledge of the Banat habitat at the end of the 15th century are Turkish sources.

One can use today data regarding the 13th century settlements from the Danube Valley and the Oraviţa Depression. The heart of the villages from Gornea, Moldova Veche ad Berzasca were located in lower areas near the Danube, sometimes close to the course of some stream.

²¹ V. Achim, *AnB*, S.N., *Arheologie – Istorie*, III, 1993, p. 254-258.

²² R. Popa, *op.cit.*, p. 82; Gy. Györffy, *AH*, 6, 1959, p. 168 seq.

The 13th century dwellings from Ilidia and Vraniuț, for example, had been built close to the Vicinic and Ciclova creeks.

Most of the 14th century villages were located in depressions or along the courses of the rivers and creeks flowing from the low Banat Mountains. They usually had an altitude between 200 and 300 meters, on the lower and middle course of the rivers. Hearts of some 14th century settlements from the Bârzava Valley have archaeologically been identified at Șoșdea, Ghertenish, Berzovia and Ramna. They were located on a stripe along the watercourse, usually at the confluence of the river with the low hills bounding northwards the Bârzava Valley. A similar distribution has been noticed on the lower course of the Bistra River, at Glimboca and Obreja, where one could identify the hearts of some disappeared settlements (Vârciorova, Ramna, Mihăenți etc.). Within the Almăj depression, 14th century habitat areas had been identified at Bozovici, Moceriș, Șopotu Vechi, on the low terraces of the Nera River and on the lower courses of its tributaries. The chancellery documents testify for an important number of settlements spread between the tops of the hills, 300 to 400 meters high. There were few permanent settlements at altitudes more than 500 m, usually on the platforms from the Semenik Mountains.

The stair-like relief, resembling a westward open amphitheater, had determined a certain structure of the medieval habitat in southern Banat. Information from the written sources, completed by the data offered by the medieval archaeology, certifies the existence of settlements and Romanian social and politic structures on the upper courses of the Bârzava, Timiș and Caraș rivers, during the 14th and 15th centuries. The data is not sufficient for one to concomitantly follow the evolution of habitat in the higher areas and on the valleys, in close connection with the age of the settlement. There are clear indices, for the 14th century at least, pointing out the existence of villages on the upper courses of the rivers and on the western slopes of the Semenik Mountains. The Turkish sources can offer extremely suggestive indicia, connected to the extension of the habitat on the forested valleys below the Anina Mountains, as for example at Ilidia and Ciclova. The debut of this phenomenon can be doubtlessly be assigned to the 15th century. The tendentious reconstitution of the habitat in the area below the Semenik Mountains, which is defined as uninhabited by Gy. Györffy is evident and contradicts the historical information.

The existence of proprieties and villages belonging to the Timișel lords during the 14th and 15th centuries, on the western slopes of the Semenik Mountains, in the area of 600 - 900 meters high erosion platforms proves the expansion of the habitat toward higher zones.

The shape and the size of the Banat villages starting with the 15th century is still an open matter, as very few answers had been given by the

written sources and the medieval archaeology. Statistical documents on the number of houses from a village; the population and the rural economy had begun to be appear at the middle of the 18th century, following the interests of the Habsburg Imperial authorities in administrating the Banat or the specific interests of the Orthodox Church.

The January 1757 statistic of the churches in the Caransebeș eparchy is offering data on the number of houses and the status of the cult monuments in the villages from southern Banat²³. Complete information is to be found in a 1774 report of an administrative employee. The data can be useful for the reconstitution of the medieval habitat only as comparison terms in the evolution of the rural Banat habitat²⁴.

The 14th century chancellery documents are lacunal when dealing with the size and internal structure of a village. Except for the Bârzava valley and the Caraș Plain, all the other intra- mountainous areas from Banat are completely lacking such references. Estimations of the size of the villages in the Timiș – Cerna passageway or in the Bistra Valley, not only for the 14th century but also for the following period, are to be considered strictly hypothetical. Medieval archaeology had not offered the necessary data in this respect. The 1351 donation act for the Biniș possession mentions the heart of the village (*locum seu situm ville Belenus*) and its boundaries²⁵. After the middle of the 14th century, the village called Șoșdea, nearly located, on the Bârzava valley, became the property of the same Hench family from Biniș. In 1369, it had twenty-four households located along an east – west oriented road²⁶. The documents kept in the Himfy family's archive offer nuanced information on the settlements forming the family's domain in the second half of the 14th century, located in the fertile area close to the Bârzava and Pogănești rivers. The documents issued in 1389, August 12, setting the division of the Ersig – Remetea domain, also records a number of 28 villages, deserted households and the water-mills on the Bârzava and Pogănești rivers²⁷. This document has a great importance, since the information offered on the size of the Romanian villages and their demography had been analyzed and critically used by both the Romanian and Hungarian historiography. Out of the 28 men-

²³ I.D. Suciu, R. Constantinăscu, *Documente referitoare la istoria Mitropoliei Banatului*, 1, Timisoara, 1980, p. 222, 225, 230.

²⁴ J.J. Ehrler, *op.cit.*, p. 58-70, 131-133, 143-144. The district of Caransebeș had had at the time 75 out the 76 settlements with an exclusively Romanian population; the 41 settlements of the district of Orșova, including the Almăj region, were all Romanian.

²⁵ V. Achim, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

²⁶ DHC, C, XIII, p. 581-582.

²⁷ Pesty, Krassó, III, p. 185 sqq.; Doc.Val., p. 362; I. Moga, *Les Roumains de Transylvanie au Moyen Âge*, Sibiu, 1944, p. 108-110.

tioned villages, the number of the serf families is mentioned for 22 of them. The Ersig property had three water mills on the Pogăniș river, a deserted residence and almost 40 serf families, for the Izgar propriety four deserted residences and sixteen serf families are mentioned, while 26 serf families are mentioned as living near the Vermeș valley. Among the settlements with more than 20 families in servitude, the villages of the noblemen Nicholas (*Nicolae kneaz*) and Brebu are mentioned. A number of 8 settlements had less than 10 families in servitude within their boundaries. The one named *Arkikumfalva* had only one family of serfs.

One can notice the great number of villages in servitude that had more than ten or even twenty households. Their location within the boundaries of the Ersig property, given the lack of specific place names in the area, is no easy task. They have gravitated around the important centers of this property, located in the Pogăniș Valley, represented by the Ersig and Izgar settlements. The document offers no data on the important settlements from the Bârzava Valley, such as Remetea, Ramna or Galonea. The dispossession actions against the Romanian noblemen (*knez*) from the Caraș Valley and the trials that took place in the second half of the 14th century had sometimes referred to the size of the villages in the area. In 1357, the castellan of *Ersomlou*, Ioan Pecenegu, had forcefully dispossessed the noblemen Farcaș, Grigore and Nicolae, sons of Zokul, of their property in the Secăș Valley. He agreed to offer them, in exchange of this property, a lot suitable for the building of 50 households (*unam sessionem terre ... ubi quinquaginta mansiones fieri possent*)²⁸. The documents of the trial concerning the Valea property from 1373 mention some of the settlements within its boundaries and their size. One can accordingly find that the village owned by Ștefan (Stephan) had only four households (*villam seu possessionem Stephani kenesi ubi quator essent mansiones*), the Guden property had approximately the same dimensions (*una possessionem et keneziatum Guden in quo quinque rustici residerent*), while the villages *Foktalan* and *Berliște* had 8 to 9 residences. On the bounding of the Valea property in 1378, 108 persons in servitude and a church, made partly of wood were mentioned²⁹.

The summary data offered by the chancellery documents for some of the villages on the Bârzava and Caraș valleys at the end of the 14th century do not allow conclusions or general estimations on the habitat from the southeastern Banat. The archaeological documentation could only offer, within a range determined by the extent of the excavations, the information to complete the chancellery documents.

²⁸ *DAH*, C. XI, p. 288

²⁹ Pesty, Krassó, III, p. 135-136.

3. The Demographic Situation of the Banat Settlements during the 14th – 15th Centuries

The reconstitution of the demographic structures of the Banat villages involves a certain risk and approximation, given the relatively poor sources concerned with the matter. The real demographic sources had appeared in the 18th century, when the fiscal and confessional enrollments have been realized³⁰. J.J. Ehrler's study from 1774, high employee of the Imperial Administration of Banat at the time, reflects the population number and the social and ethnic structure of it, according to the administrative units³¹. The demographic information from this report can constitute a reference in evaluating the demographic evolution of Banat for three centuries. One can also use the Turkish enrollments from 1579, which specify in some cases the number of the inhabitants. At the time, concentrations of inhabitants were recorded in the case of the district centers from Deta³² (2380 inhabitants), Bocşa (1050 inhabitants) and Caraşova Mare (1350 inhabitants). The rural settlements from the Pogăniş and Bârzava valleys had between 100 and 200 inhabitants. On the upper courses of these rivers, there were villages with 50 inhabitants, like Doman, with 95 inhabitants like Ţerova and Caraşova Mică or even with 15 inhabitants - Duleu³³. The data from the Turkish sources can be taken as basis for the demographic evaluation of the 15th century settlements from this area. The average number of inhabitants in a settlement would accordingly be of 180, meaning around 40 families per village. The figures for the settlements in the southeastern area of Banat are below the average figure of 320 inhabitants, as proposed for the settlements in Transylvania in the second half of the 14th century and the first half of the 15th century³⁴. It is obvious that the settlements located in the lower zones of the valleys, toward the plains, had a greater number of inhabitants.

The attempt to evaluate the demographic situation of the Banat settlements in the 14th century has to surmount the obstacle represented by the historical sources, which is to be found also in the case of the neighboring regions.

The documentary support of this attempt is to be found in certain references made in the 14th century chancellery acts, regarding the size of

³⁰ S. Bolovan, I. Bolovan, *RT*, I, 1, 1991, p. 103.

³¹ J.J. Ehrler, *op.cit.*, p. 143-144.

³² T. Halasi-Kun, *The Effects of Islamic and Judaic-Christian in the East European Pattern World*, Ed. by A. Aascher, T. Halasi-Kun and B.K. Kiraly, Brooklyn, N.Y., 1979, p. 115-116

³³ T. Halasi-Kun, *AO*, X, 1985, p. 105-132.

³⁴ St. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, II, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, p. 371.

some villages in southeastern Banat. The village *Șoșdea*, from the Bârzava Valley, had 24 households in 1369. The situation of the Ersig property from the same area in 1389 is also known. Out of the 28 villages, for 22 of them the number of serfs, of the serf lots and deserted households is mentioned³⁵. On the Pogăniș Valley, at Iersig, there are some 40 serfs households mentioned, while in Izgar there were 42 such households. A disappeared settlement named *Kechfalva* had at the time of the property's division 43 households. The villages owned by *Brebu* and *Mayafalva* on the Bârzava Valley had 24 serf families each. Almost a quarter of the mentioned settlements had fewer than 10 such households. The village owned by *Halmag* had two serf households, while *Kunfalva* had only one.

The final document of the trial for the Valea property in 1378 brings information on the size of some villages neighboring this estate, relevant for the reconstitution of the habitat's dynamic in the Caraș Valley in southern Banat. The *Guden* property with 5 families of villagers is mentioned under the authority of the Caraș fortress. The village owned by *Pavel* had also 5 families and was depending on the Ilidia fortress, while the village of *Ștefan* had 4 households. The property of *Ștefan de Zeker* comprised the village *Berliște* with 8 households and the *Foktalan* possession with 9 households. For the Valea property, a church and 8 serf families were enrolled.

The data on the Banat settlements from the second half of the 14th century has differently been used in the estimation of the number of their inhabitants. Accepting a family index of 4.5, one gets for each of the villages around Valea property a number of 30 – 40 inhabitants and for the property a number of some 500 inhabitants. In using the same method for the villages in the Bârzava Valley, the value for the settlements from Izgar, Ersig and *Kechfalva* is higher than 200. The settlements near to Bârzava, the village owned by *Brebu*, *Mayanfalva* and *Borziluc* had each around 100 inhabitants, while others had between 60 and 80 inhabitants. Some eight settlements had 20 to 30 inhabitants or even less. In associating the figures obtained for the settlements in the Bârzava and Caraș valleys, in the second half of the 14th century, the villages from this part of Banat had an average number of households of 21. The estimations for the same area, using a family index of 12 – 13, had produced demographic values for the 14th century that were even higher than those certainly documented for the second half of the 16th century³⁶.

The demographic estimations for the 14th century settlements from

³⁵ Pesty, Krassó, III, p. 185; *Doc.Val.*, p. 362; I. Moga, *op.cit.*, p. 109.

³⁶ St. Pascu, *op.cit.*, II, p. 349, 353, 356-357 reaches values of 650 inhabitants for Ersig, 570 for Izgar, 1450 inhabitants in the Valea village in 1378 and 320 inhabitants in Șoșdea in 1369.

Banat are similar to those for the contemporaneous settlements in the neighboring area of Hateg or in other mountainous areas from Transylvania and the Hungarian Kingdom³⁷. As the archaeological documentation will offer more precise information on the 14th – 15th century habitat, the demographic reconstitution will be more nuanced and exact.

4. Ethnical Situation of the Settlements

The topic of the ethnical composition of the settlements directly connected to their oldness and name is a constant of the historiographic approaches of the theme³⁸. Historical concepts and methodology had sometimes been subordinated to preconceived ideas on the presence of the Romanians in this space. The theory on the migrations of the Romanians and the establishment of their settlements within the mountainous space of the Banat is to be found in the Hungarian historiography, starting with P. Frigyes until the more recent reconstitution of historical geography of G. Györffy³⁹. The onomastic sources, including toponymy and anthroponymy, beside the diplomatic ones, have an important role in approaching this segment of the Banat medieval historical geography. The list of the Catholic parishes in the Archidiaconate of Caraș and Sebeș between 1333 and 1335 held 13 and 10 settlements respectively⁴⁰. In southern Banat, one can identify the Catholic parishes from Vrșac and Ilidia in the Archidiaconate of Caraș and those from Sebeș, Lugoj and Carașova in the Archidiaconate of Sebeș. Most of them were located along

³⁷ R. Popa, *Tara Hategului*, p. 135 estimated an average number of 20 families for a 14th century village in the Hateg county. K. Horedt, *Contribuții la istoria Transilvaniei în sec. IV – XIII*, 1958, p. 46, with an average number of 24 families for a 14th century village. I. Szabó, *A falurendszer kialakulása Magyarországon (X-XV század)*, Budapest, 1966, p. 191 asserts that the most of the villages no more than 10 households.

³⁸ S. Dragomir, *AIIN*, III, 1926, p. 281; V. Motogna, *Banatul de altădată*, I, 1944, p. 314-315; Șt. Manculea, *Banatul de altădată*, p. 334; I.D. Suci, *Monografia Mitropoliei Banatului*, Timișoara, 1977, p. 68-69.

³⁹ Pesty, *Krassó*, I, p. 109; G. Györffy, *op.cit.*, p. 473. L. Makkai, *Histoire de la Transilvanie*, Budapest, 1992, p. 181 and next still speaks of "the noble homeland" of the Romanians and of their infiltration and colonization within the Carpathian basin in the 14th century. He reuses old historiographic clichés, which are also to be found in *Documenta Valachorum*, p. XVI, when speaking of the catastrophic demographic consequences upon the Hungarians living in the Severin Banat, following the great Mongol invasion. This depopulation in the Danube area of the Banat would have been followed, according to this "scenario", by an intense Romanian immigration. I. Moga, *Les roumains de Transilvanie au Moyen Age*, Sibiu, 1944, p. 43 had brought relevant arguments against this image of the ethnical situation within the Carpathian arch in the 13th and 14th centuries.

⁴⁰ *D/R*, C, 14th century, III, p. 229, 233-235, 244; S. Dragomir, *op.cit.*, p. 281; V. Motogna, *op.cit.*, p. 315.

the plain bordering the western hills, from Şemlacu Mare and Denta to Vrşac. The 14th century chancellery documents mention communities of *Hospites* in settlements located on the southern border of the Caraş Plain or close to the Timiş River (*Ciatar*, *Zeredahel*, Caran and Semlac).

The Banat districts were a homogenous group of Romanian settlements. The case of the village Biniş from the Cuieşti district, which had been donated in 1349 to a family of a Hungarian country nobleman, had been an exception that did not altered the ethnical ratio in the area. According to the data from the sources referring to the southern Banat settlements in the 14th century, one can estimate that 12% of the settlements were not Romanian.

This rather high percentage of settlements not originating in the Romanian milieu can be explained by considering their location in the stripe of plain surrounding the mountainous area of Banat. Most of them were located in the western part of the plain, i.e. on the outskirts of the mountainous Banat. The settlements within the mountainous area were reflecting another ethnical reality in the same span of time, as the Romanian settlements represented over 95% of the total. Starting with the 15th century, the ethnographic map of the southern Banat had suffered certain alterations, resulting in changes of the ethnic and territorial relations. The Turkish conquests south of the Danube during the 15th century had caused an afflux of Slavic population northwards, to Banat and southern Hungary. Historians had estimated that from the end of the 14th century until the end of the 15th century there had been five distinct stages of Serb emigration⁴¹. The Hungarian kings Sigismund of Luxembourg and Matei Corvin had encouraged these population movements within the kingdom. The domain of the *Ersumlio* (nowadays Vrşac in Serbia) fortress had been donated by Sigismund of Luxembourg to the Serbian despot George Branković. The Turkish sources are attesting for the middle of the 16th century the presence of the Serbia population at Deta, in the area of Moraviţa Plain⁴². Within the compact mass of Romanian villages between Bârzava and Caraş rivers is located the Slavic enclave of the *Karashovenes*, comprising seven settlements⁴³. This Catholic population, religiously distinguished from the Slavic Orthodox body south of the Danube had been for a long time considered as being of Bulgarian origin⁴⁴. The study of their dialect had emphasized its origin and connections with the Serbian – Croatian language from Serbia. Their settling in the Lupac Depression

⁴¹ St. Manciualea, *op.cit.*, p. 336-338. I.D. Suciu, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

⁴² T. Halasi-Kun, *The Effects of Islamic ...*, p. 166

⁴³ The *Karashovene* villages are Caraşova, Lupac, Nermel, Clocotici, Rafnic, Vodnic and Iabalcea.

⁴⁴ St. Manciualea, *op.cit.*, p. 340

and the Caraș Valley most probably took place during the 15th century⁴⁵. The settling of this ethnic group had not sensibly altered the ethnic and demographic aspect of the mountainous Banat in the 15th century. The space of the eight privileged districts from this period comprised a homogeneous zone of Romanian settlements. The 15th century written documents attesting the Romanian districts from the Danube Iron Gates area confirm the existence of a Romanian world, evolving in close connection with the neighboring areas.

5. Names of Settlements

The Hungarian diplomatic sources from the 14th and 15th centuries and the Turkish sources from the 16th century document the place names from southern Banat. These denominations had raised a series of questions regarding their origin, their creators and the ethnic and territorial relations in southern Banat at the time. The information offered by the study of the minor toponymy in the mountainous area is a fundamental source for this segment of medieval historical geography. A considerable number of some 60 villages had names originating in a person's name. Many of these names had been recorded in the second half of the 14th century on the domains of Ersig and Remetea, as villages owned by a local lord. Some settlements from the same period are known in the Caraș Valley, around the Valea property, mentioned with the name of their lord. The documentary information is incomplete, since frequently the villages are only mentioned once, in order to enable connections between the age of the settlement and the "settler" giving its name. It is estimated that the 22 villages belonging to local lords from the Remetea domain had been established by the lords whom name they bear. This observation can not be backed for the entire southern Banat, i.e. identifying all the toponym coming from a person's name with the "settler". This matter had nonetheless raised a series of objections in the literature⁴⁶.

The linguistic and toponymic studies had pointed out for Banat many topical names that originate in a person's name and at the same time a chronological stratification of these names. Part of the topical names originate in the period anterior to the 10th century, in the Romanian – Slavic epoch, while others, like those from the Almăj Valley, preserve the influence of the Serbian dialects from the 15th century⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ E. Petrovici, *Graiul crașovenilor. Studiu de dialectologie slavă meridională*, București, 1935, p. 221-224.

⁴⁶ R. Popa, *Țara Hategului*, p. 124; N. Drăganu, *op.cit.*, p. 231, 237.

⁴⁷ E. Petrovici, *SDT*, p. 138-139, 141; I. Pătruț, *Studii de limbă românească*, Cluj, 1974.

The chancellery documents had recorded in the 14th and 15th centuries more than 15 settlements located in the valley bearing the same name with the river flowing closely. The village *Borzua*, mentioned in 1459 as belonging to the lords from Țerova, was located on the upper course of the Bârzava River. A 1397 document recorded a settlement named Pogăniș on the Pogăniș River. Other settlements were located on creeks or tributaries of some southern Banat rivers, like the three Vârciorova and Ramna, recorded at the end of the 15th century on the Bistra Valley or those named Teregova, Timișel, Bizere or Bolvașnița. There is doubtlessly a relation of interdependence between the age of the villages, their names and the hydronym close to their heart⁴⁸.

The medieval Banat documents indicate common aspects with a phenomenon documented for the Transylvanian habitat: different settlements having the same name of settlements with two names used concomitantly. In the first case, one can cite the three "Igrici" recorded in 1427 or the three "Turcu" (poss. *Haramturcu*) existent in 1346 near the royal city of Vrșac. There were three villages named Bolvașnița in the district of Mehadia, recorded in 1436. The emergence of new villages following partitions had determined partial changes in the name of the settlements, caused by the use of suffixes: *Mare* (Great), *Mic* (Little), *Sus* (Upper), *Jos* (Lower) or *Mijlociu* (Middle). This modification had been identified in the case of Vârciorova and Ramna on the Bistra Valley, Carașova and Halimba.

The inventory of the 13th – 15th centuries settlements bearing two names points to a relative small number of cases. Situations like Glimboca – Novăcești, Gârliște – Rudăria, Bocorondia – Diakolch, Valea Bistrei – Negotești, Valea – Potoc have been recorded. Such cases are to be found in all the areas of southern Banat⁴⁹.

6. The Settling and the Problem of the Deserted Villages

The date of the settling of a medieval village is a matter of great importance for the research in historical geography. The main historical written source – the chancellery documents – offer no information on their chronology and the circumstances of the settling, since the moment of recording was posterior to the moment of the emergence of the settlement. Exhaustive archaeological investigation of the heart of a village and of the contemporaneous necropolises can offer information enabling the setting of a relative chronology at least for the settlement. The archaeo-

⁴⁸ N. Drăgan, *op.cit.*, p. 240, 243-245; E. Petrovici, *op.cit.*, p. 287-290 asserts that the names of the settlements (Bolvașnița, Petroșnița, Iardoșița) had been the origin of the proximate hydronyms.

⁴⁹ Information for each case is to be found in the local records.

logical excavations from southern Banat had brought firsthand information for the knowledge of the medieval habitat.

The settlements from the Danube Iron Gates area had entered the sphere of feudal juridical relations in the 15th century only. The village of Gomea, as part of the Liubcova district, had been mentioned as late as 1554 in the Turkish enrollments⁵⁰ but archaeologists had proved the existence of an important settlement here as early as the 12th century. This settlement had continued its existence during the 14th and 15th centuries, possibly as the center of the Liubcova district. Similar circumstances are documented for the settlement at Moldova Veche. The corroboration of the data in the written sources with those offered by the medieval archeology enables a more precise setting of the emergence of a settlement.

Chronological differentiation of the villages according to the moment of their recording is relative. The formal character of this method and the errors generated by its use had been discussed in analyzing the medieval habitat from the Hațeg "country"⁵¹. A statistical synthesis of the settlements' attestation points out that until the middle of the 14th century a number of 64 settlements were recorded, while during the second half of the century some 90 settlements were recorded. In the 15th century, 74 settlements were recorded until 1450 and another 39 until the end of the century. During the 14th and 15th centuries, there had been 267 records of settlements. One should add to these records another 4 settlements, documented at the end of the 13th century. Medieval archaeology had identified the hearts or necropolises of other 12 settlements from the 13th – 14th centuries. Absolute majority of the settlements documented in the first half of the 14th century or at the end of the 13th century were located at the base of the mountain "amphitheater" of Banat, at the confluence of the plain with the western hills. This fact confirms once more that the time of the documentary attestation had been determined by the penetration of the feudal and juridical relations imposed by the royal authority.

In following the dynamic of the Banat habitat, by separating the settlements established in the 13th and 14th centuries from those established in the 15th century one must be cautious, given the contemporary stage of historical and archaeological documentation. Unilateral interpretation of the data, without an archaeological control of the documentary information, may create – as it had been tried for other zones in Transylvania – the image of a demographic "explosion" during the 14th century. The available data on the demography of the Banat villages in the 14th and 15th centuries do not allow their differentiation according to the criteria of size and importance.

⁵⁰ P. Engel, *op.cit.*, p. 86

⁵¹ R. Popa, *Țara Hațegului*, p. 139.

The use of a geographic criterion, that of the size of the settlements, had been proposed for the Hateg "country", in order to set a relative chronology of the settlements. The premise was that the "older" villages were initially located in the lower, plain areas that had offered considerable resources for the settlement, while the "newer" villages had subsequently occupied higher areas – high valleys, hills and even mountain plateaus. The 10th – 13th centuries' deforestation is a phenomenon generally admitted by the European historiography. Still, there had been some objections to this pattern of habitat's evolution, which presumes a steadily increasing demographic index and a social and economic frame unchanged for centuries. This is why a differentiated approach of each geographical area imposes itself.

The emergence of new settlements in the second half of the 14th century and during the 15th century, of which names were accompanied by suffixes like "Sus", "Jos", "Mare", "Mică" proves the establishing of "new" settlements, as compared to the initial, "older" ones. Such villages had been mentioned during the second half of the 15th century, on the western skirts of the Semenik Mountains. Accordingly, the Lower, Middle and Upper Vârclorova were recorded along the Bistra River, towards the slopes of the Polana Ruscă Mountains. Turkish sources offer data on settlements located on collateral, narrow and forested valleys in the area of Oravița Hills and the Danube Iron Gates towards the end of the 15th century⁵².

Within the same medieval habitat from Banat, one can record for the same period the phenomenon of depopulation and abandoning of settlements. This is a common phenomenon for the European Middle Age and had been documented for Transylvania and Banat. Among the frequent causes invoked by historiography are the economic crises, local conflicts, abusive dispossessions and natural calamities⁵³. In mid 14th century, documents had recorded proofs of such processes in southern Banat. The agreement between the Himfy noblemen from 1377-1378 regarding the partition of the domain mentions the deserted village of Bratoca⁵⁴. A document dated August 12, 1389 illustrates the situation of the small settlements from the same domain, inhabited by 2 or 3 serf families. There were four deserted households in the vicinity of an important property like Izgar and one deserted household near Ersig. The Romanian district Cuiești, close to the Dognecea Hills, was recorded as depopulated in 1389 and was taken over by the Himfy family (*districtum de Kwesd habitatoribus*

⁵² P. Engel, *op.cit.*, p. 23. the village Baca north of Ilidia, on the skirts of Anina Mountains and the village Botușu, in the same zone.

⁵³ G. Duby, *Homme et structure du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1973, p. 321-322; A. Habostiak, *op.cit.*, p. 227-237. St. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, II, p. 120-123.

⁵⁴ *Doc. Val.*, p. 222: *villa Bratoca que nunc desolata est*.

destitutum). The 1376 complaint of the local noblemen from the Remetea domain is extremely suggestive in regard of the condition of such villages owned by a lord on a large domain⁵⁵. Besides, for this area of the Bârzava Valley an extremely high rate of deserted villages had been recorded. Abuses of the domain's employees and the permanent conflicts with the Cuiești chatelaines had forced the villagers from Remetea and their landlords to abandon their settlements. The village of Golonia, on the banks of Bârzava was *in great misery because of the Chuchuest chatelaine... the men living in Golonia want to leave forever*⁵⁶. The local noblemen (*Knez*) from the Remetea domain were also complaining against the excessive taxes, because of which *fourteen men want to leave and twelve men will die of hunger*⁵⁷. The number of villages recorded on the Remetea – Ersig domain at the end of 14th century, as compared to the statistics regarding the same domain at the middle of the 16th century indicates a high rate of deserted settlements. Out of some 50 villages mentioned on the Himfy domain in the second half of the 14th century, only 2 villages had survived until mid 16th century: Ramna and Ersig, i.e. 98% village abandon. The analysis of the habitat on the upper course of the Bârzava River, within the Bârzava district, points out a totally different situation. Seven settlements out of the ten documented had survived until the Turkish enrollments (30% abandon). The figures for the Mehadia district, in the southeastern extremity of the mountainous zone indicate a 60% abandon of villages. As long as for Transylvania the abandon coefficient had been evaluated at 34%, the same coefficient for the Caraș region had been evaluated at 73%⁵⁸. Nevertheless, analysis of the data on the settlements in southern Banat had offered a figure close to that estimated for Transylvania (36%).

Archaeological and written documentation offers unequal data on the emergence and abandon of the medieval settlements in the micro-zones of the mountainous Banat. The settlements from the Danube Iron Gates area and those from the Almăj Depression had been recorded in the chancellery documents starting with the 15th century. One should assume that these communities had existed and used local judicial and social organization patterns for two or three centuries before the first written mention of their being. Archaeological documentation along with the existing written sources indicate in certain areas a stability and continuity of life within the heart of medieval villages during the 13th – 15th centuries. The 13th – 15th century necropolis of the village from Cuptoare, in the Mehadica Depression, suggestively illustrates this aspect of the medieval Banat habitat.

⁵⁵ M. Holban, *SMIM*, II, 1957, p. 410-417.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 409

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 410

⁵⁸ St. Pascu, *op.cit.*, II, p. 128, 131-132.

The archaeological excavations from Gornea had unearthed remains of the 12th – 13th century rural habitat, which enable the understanding of location and positioning of the households within a Romanian medieval village.

An ample archaeological investigation of the habitat of the 10th – 14th centuries only would offer answers to the problems raised by the reconstitution of the mountainous Banat historical geography and it should offer the connecting elements with the earlier habitat in the same area. The chancellery documents had placed the final stage of setting of the medieval villages in Transylvania and Banat in the 14th – 15th centuries.⁵⁹ The existence and evolution of some older, dispersed villages in these areas had preceded this stage.

⁵⁹ I. Moga, *op. cit.*, p. 108-112 ; R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

V. MEDIEVAL ECONOMY

The attempt to reconstitute the characteristics of the 10th – 14th century environment in southern Banat, in order to understand its impact on the medieval settlements and economy proves to be hard a task. Historical sources pertinent to the topic are scarce. However, even for the central and western European spaces, despite the accumulations of much more diverse and consistent historical and archaeological information, historians had face the same problem¹. The environment had greatly influenced existence, evolution and economical specificity of a rural settlement. Historians and archaeologists unanimously back this statement².

Archaeological investigation of the medieval settlements from Ildia, Gornea, Moldova Veche and Berzovia, dated to the 12th – 14th centuries, had brought to light evidences of the economic life of the communities once living there. The Banat medieval archaeology do not posses yet data offered by interdisciplinary research of the resources available in the 10th – 14th centuries, size of the agricultural lots, climate etc. Only had archaeo-paleozoological investigations offered useful data for the medieval settlements in southern Banat³. Usually following patrimonial conflicts, chancellery documents from the 14th – 15th centuries had recorded aspects of the economic life of the medieval Banat villages and domains.

The southern Banat relief is mostly mountainous and hilly. Forests had evidently dominated this space during the Middle Age and had influenced the climate. Cartographic and narrative sources from the 18th century, recording the Banat environmental characteristics towards the end of the Middle Age had proved this fact⁴. Deep forest was dominating southern Banat in the Danube Iron Gates, Caransebeș, Lugoj, Semenic and Vârșeț areas. The Banat Mountains were covered with oak, hornbeam and beech, but also with certain species of trees specific of the Mediterranean area. Forests and shrubs had covered not only the

¹ G. Duby, *Guerriers et paysans VIII^e - XII^e siècle. Premier essor de l'économie européen*, 1973, p. 13-14.

² Janssen, *op.cit.*, p. 300-308.

³ G. El Susi, *Vânători, pescari și crescători de animale în Banatul mileniilor VI î.Ch. – I d.Ch.*, Timișoara, 1996, p. 187-190.

⁴ F. Griselin, *op.cit.*, p. 240; J.J. Ehrler, *op.cit.*, p. 29 had mentioned a forested surface equivalent with 5379 sq. km, representing 20% of the Banat's area.

mountains but also the deep valleys, as F. Grisellini's map proves it⁵.

Significant place names, such as *Lazuri*, *Culmea Lazului*, *Cracu Lazului* or *Runcu* are standing for the deforestation that took place in southern Banat. These place names are to be found within the boundaries of Mehadia, Glimboca, Turnu Rueni, Luncavița, villages located on the skirts of the mountains⁶. A bounding document from 1376 mentions a place called *Laz* on the Mâtnic Valley⁷. Written sources do not enable one to follow chronologically and spatially the process of deforestation in the 14th and 15th centuries. Specifying the epoch when the terms *Runc* and *Laz*, clearly symbolizing deforestation, had become topical names is strictly a problem of the linguistic research⁸.

The summary and scarce information from the 14th – 15th centuries diplomatic sources backs a debate on the agricultural techniques, draft animals and agricultural lots of a medieval household. An act issued in 1322 mentions "the manured plowing lots" from the domains of Teodor of Voiteg, in Caraș and Timiș⁹. Manuring had been documented for the 14th century Banat but it probably had been used much earlier. This fertilization technique was already a custom during the 14th century in the Caraș and Bârzava valleys. The manured lots belonging to the domains of Voia, Secăș and other southern Banat areas had been mentioned in documents from 1361. A 1368 document also mentions the manured lots from the *Terien* domain, near *Haram*¹⁰.

The written sources from the 14th – 15th centuries lack information on the farming implements, which places us entirely in the domain of hypotheses. Moreover, neither has medieval archaeology bring any contributions to the knowledge of the agricultural inventory of the medieval Banat settlements. One can still cite the significant finds from Berzovia and Vârșeț. The use of team and of farming implements, especially of the plow, is to be supposed for the rural Banat settlements during the 13th – 14th centuries, according to a series of findings regarding the evolution of this type of equipment. As the Banat represented a link between southern Danube areas and Transylvania in respect of several medieval cultural aspects, one is enabled to back these hypotheses. The graphic representation of plows pulled by several pairs of draft animals from a cult monument from Hațeg, dated to the 14th century and the presence of the

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 240 and the map.

⁶ V. Ioniță, *op.cit.*, p. 262, 256, 269.

⁷ Pesty, Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 7: *eadem viam pervenit ad unum laz, et per ipsum laz ubi similiter unam melam terram arexissent*

⁸ V. Ioniță, *op.cit.*, p. 125.

⁹ *DIA*, C, XIV, II, (1321-1330), p. 54

¹⁰ *DAH*, C, XII, (1361-1365), p. 52; *DAH*, C, XIII, p. 553.

rake, early documented for the medieval settlements represent valid comparison terms for Banat¹¹. One can not avoid an extremely important matter connected to the medieval agriculture that of the traction systems and drafts animal used for pulling. Lefebvre de Noëttes's study on the horse and oxen teams used in the Byzantine Empire had opened a new perspective on this topic and had explained a great invention of the medieval world¹². The pulling harness for horses in use during Antiquity was primitive and uncomfortable, so that efficiency in pulling weights over 500 kg was extremely low. The modern harness for the horses, using a rigid collar pressing against the shoulders, appeared in the 8th century and had gradually spread during the next centuries¹³. Nail horseshoeing, generalized starting with the 11th century both in Occident and Byzantine Empire, had raised the efficiency and determined a larger scale use of horses as draft animals. Horseshoeing is archaeologically documented in the Banat settlements starting with the 14th century. It seems that the Occidental traction system had not been adopted by the Byzantine medieval world. Still, as early as the 13th century, the Serbs have adopted it, as an illustrated manuscript suggest it, through the agency of the Latin crusaders¹⁴.

The chancellery documents from the second half of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century mention the draft animals from the Banat rural settlements.

Their importance is evident, for the serf households and for the small or large feudal domains and is supported by the numerous recorded patrimonial conflicts, having the theft of draft animals as object. In statistically analyzing these documentary references, one can notice that mentioning of stolen horses is more frequent during the last decade of the 14th century and the first decades of the 15th century¹⁵. Starting with mid 14th century, mentions of transactions and dispossessions concerning oxen are more frequently. In 1392, besides money and certain goods, 100 oxen have been given as price of the possession Hideg and Timișel, in the zone of the Domașnea Depression¹⁶. Facts are much more relevant for the

¹¹ R. Popa, *Țara Hațegului*, p. 205, fig. 31, St. Olteanu, *op.cit.*, regarding the diffusion of rake as part of the plow.

¹² Lefebvre de Noëttes, *Le system d'attelage du cheval et du boeuf à Byzance et les conséquences de son emploi*, *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, I, Paris, 1930, p. 185-188

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 188. Jean Gimpel, *Revoluția industrială în evul mediu*, București, 1983, p. 52-54.

¹⁴ Lefebvre de Noëttes, *op.cit.*, p. 188

¹⁵ Pesty Fr., *Krassó*, III, p. 63, 247, 277; Ortway, *Oklevélek Tm*, p. 244, 503, 488-489.

¹⁶ Pesty, Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 14

fertile zone on the middle course of the Bârzava River. The 1376 complaint of the landlords from the Remetea domain refers, among other injustices, to the dispossession of draft animals. The landlords from Remetea and Goloane had been deprived of the possession of 50 oxen, besides other goods and money¹⁷. Similar actions were recorded at Ersig and Șoșdea in 1410 and in the Gherteniș area in 1411¹⁸. Together with the draft animals, the plows were sometimes taken, as it happen in 1418¹⁹. These mentions from chancellery acts prove that oxen were mostly used as draft animals during the 14th century. It seems that the mutation that took place in the second half of the 13th century in Central and Western Europe²⁰, imposing the horse as the main draft animal, did not affect Banat.

The presence of the water mills in mountainous Banat reflects, on one hand, an aspect of the rural economy and on the other hand the exploitation of the energetic resources by using a technology specific of the Middle Ages. Water mills had been invented in the Antiquity but it symbolizes the Middle Ages, according to March Bloch, from its diffusion point of view²¹.

The first mentions of water mills in Banat are to be found in mid 13th century written sources. Water mills are recorded in 1247 for the western area of the Lower Danube²². On the Bârzava River, a grinding device was functioning as early as 1270: *molenalinum nostrum regalem in Mezeusumlov super fluvium Borzua*²³.

Mid 14th century' documents had recorded the existence of water mills in southern Banat. Although many more mills should have existed, only one is recorded on the Nera River, for the Kuesd domain. A 1364 document mentions a mill from the Almăș village, crumbled by the employee of the archbishop of Caloccea²⁴. During Middle Age, several water mills were located on the middle and lower course of the Caraș River. Accordingly, on the Voia domain, located in the Caraș Plain from the Oravița Depression, a mill had been recorded in 1378²⁵. In 1382 a conflict was

¹⁷ M. Holban, *SMIN*, 2, 1957, p. 408-411: Nicholas, son of Pribil, had been dispossessed of 17 oxen, Pavel – of 2 oxen: from the village of Goloane one ox had been taken and 30 oxen from Remetea.

¹⁸ Ortway, *Oklévélék Tm*, p. 374-437; Pesty Fr, *Krassó*, III, p. 260-261.

¹⁹ Pesty Fr, *Krassó*, III, p. 289: *ad possessionem Bastwuisse veniendo quinque boues de eorum propriu ac iobagionum ipsorum artris quator boues excepisset...*

²⁰ G. Duby, *op.cit.*, p. 219; J. Gimpel, *op.cit.*, p. 54-55.

²¹ M. Bloch, *Lavoro e tecnica nel Medioevo*, Bari, 1959, p. 59.

²² *DRH*, B, I, 1966, p. 7-8.

²³ F. Knauz, *MES*, I, 1874, p. 583.

²⁴ *DRH*, C, 12, p. 310-311.

²⁵ Pesty Fr, *Krassó*, III, p. 147.

recorded between lord Petru of Remetea and the inhabitants from Jank, because the inhabitants of this settlement had had changed the course of the river and the mill on the Voia domain had no running water. One year later, in 1383, Petru Himfi's widow was still complaining about the destroyed mill: *clamusuram cuiusdam molendini sui in fluvio Crassow*²⁶. Another water mill, located on the Caraș River, within the boundaries of the Nandraz settlement had been the object of a patrimonial conflict in 1382²⁷. Two other water mills on the Caraș River, recorded in 1389, can not be precisely located today²⁸. The preserved chancellery documents record very few data on the mills that had doubtlessly existed during the 13th and 14th centuries on the Bistra, Timiș and Cerna rivers. The 1376 records of the conflict between the Romanian noblemen of Mâtnic and the inhabitants from Caran mention the ponds belonging to the Mâtnic possession and a channel connecting the Mâtnic Valley to the Timiș River's course²⁹. Water mills had doubtlessly existed at the time on the upper Timiș course and the Sebeș course but the chancellery documents had not recorded them, for unknown reasons. The mills and the ponds from Golet, Bucosnița and Petroșnița, on the Timiș River, had been recorded in 1468, and those on the Bistra River some years later³⁰.

The written information offers a much more comprehensive image of the mills functioning during the 14th and 15th centuries on the Bârzava and Pogăniș rivers. On a transaction involving the Ciornovăț property in 1364, Petru Himfy had ceded for seven years the use of a wheel mill on the Bârzava River³¹. In a document recording the parting of the Șoșdea domain in 1369, an indefinite number of mills are mentioned along the Bârzava River. Along with the existent mills, the document also mentions the places suitable for the building of mills³². An impressive number of mills have functioned on the Bârzava River, on a 15km long segment between Gherteniș – Berzovia and Ramna. The parting act of the Ersig – Remetea domain from 1377 mentions the mills from the *Golonia* village, near to Ramna, the mill from *Gurea*, the village of Nicolae, son Pribil, the one from *Mayan* and the mill from *Lybur*, located near Remetea. Some of the mills are to be found again in the parting act of the same domain in 1389. The actual dimensions of mills and ponds building along the Bârzava River are recorded in the act issued on November 4, 1408. The noblemen

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 160-161.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 158-159.

²⁸ Ortway, *Oklevélek Tm*, p. 184.

²⁹ Pesty, Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 8.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

³¹ *DIA*, C, XII, 1985, p. 334.

³² Ortway, *Oklevélek Tm*, p. 114-115.

from Gherteniș had had destroyed a pond on the Bârzava River and had redirected the water towards the domain on the left bank of the river, so that 24 mills located on the right bank, on the Remetea domain, could not function any longer³³. A 1406 agreement between the noblemen from Gherteniș and those from Remetea, stating that *flumen Borzua vocato sub certis obligacionibus infra declaranda certis signis et distincionibus divisionem fecissesnt* had thusly been broken³⁴.

This permanent conflict over the Bârzava River, between the two neighbor domains, Remetea and Gherteniș is documented throughout the first half of the 15th century. In 1415, the nobles from Remetea had once again complained against their neighbors, which had had once again redirected the river course (*fluvium Borzua vocato a territorio dicte possessionis sue Remethe videlicet suo vero cursum et statu excipiendo in alium novum meatum predictam possessionem ipsorum Gyerthyanus transmitti et converti*)³⁵. The 1424 agreement between the Himfy noblemen from Remetea and those from Halimba was stipulating the conditions of use of the Bârzava' waters for the mills from Șoșdea and Halimba³⁶.

Chancellery documents from the second half of the 14th century attest the presence of mills along the Pogăniș River. A portion of this valley, in the Ersig area, was part of the Himfy domain. The 1377 and 1389 parting documents record three mills and a suitable place for another one in this area.

Written documents hold but scarce information on the mill's type, number of wheels driven by water and building materials used. In northern Banat, mills are documented which were entirely made of stone, but there have been mills with the buildings made of wood or both from wood and stone.

The wheel and the transmission systems are two defining elements for the typology of water mills. According to these characteristics, one can distinguish between mills with horizontal wheel and direct transmission and mills with vertical wheel and intermediate transmission. The mills with vertical wheel could have a lower water admission for those with blades or an upper admission for those having cups on the wheel³⁷. The water mills could have one, two or more wheels. A single document from 1378 records that the mill on the Caraș River belonging to the Voia village had a vertical wheel and a lower water admission (*unum molendinum inferius pellens*). The few multi-wheeled mills from Banat had, for good reasons, been

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 395-396.

³⁴ Pesty Fr, *Krassó*, III, p. 252-253.

³⁵ Ortway, *Oklevélek Tm*, p. 508

³⁶ Pesty Fr, *Krassó*, III, p. 303-304.

³⁷ C. Bucur, *Cibinum*, 1979, p. 128.

recorded in the plain areas.

The mill with horizontal water wheel had not been attested in the medieval documents regarding the mountainous Banat. The existence of such a type of medieval mill in this time span had been presumed on the basis of the hydrological characteristics of the river courses in the mountainous area and some later ethnographical arguments³⁸.

The appearance and diffusion of the water mills in the space north of the Danube is yet another problem, which had not been satisfactorily solved by the historic and archaeological research. Constantin C. Giurescu had supported the permanent existence of the water mills in the former Dacian space, following the abandon of the province until Middle Ages, invoking essential elements of the specific terminology³⁹. Historians and ethnologists had appreciated that the mill with horizontal wheel began its spreading within the northern Danube area during the 9th century or at the beginning of the 10th century. It had entered the Byzantine civilization through Bulgarian and Serbian milieu, in Banat and Oltenia initially. The mill with vertical wheel, of central and west European origin had spread, according to C. Bucur's opinion, in a short span following the emergence of the mill with horizontal wheel in the 9th – 10th centuries⁴⁰. Medieval archaeology had not offered for the present documentation able to offer enough chronological references concerning the appearance and diffusion of the water mill. In the 8th century settlements, as in the one from Ilidia for example, grindstones made of a relatively soft, rather breakable material were used. The building of a mill involved a large investment: a certain quantity of iron, which was not always easy to obtain, and a certain technological tradition. Beside, the water mill was still representing a curiosity in the 9th – 10th century in the central and west European areas, as their number began to increase starting with the end of the 11th century⁴¹.

The absence of mills at the beginning of the 11th century and the household use of grindstones is documented in a source regarding the life of St. Gerard⁴². The use of water mill in Banat had started sometimes during the 12th – 13th centuries, as suggested by the very few sources. One can and should not exclude their utilization during an earlier stage.

³⁸ C. Bucur, *Biharea*, 1977, p. 70; O. Răuț, *Banatica*, 12/2, 1993, p. 31-32.

³⁹ Constantin C. Giurescu, *Contribuții la istoria științei și tehnicii românești în secolele XV – începutul secolului XIX*, București, 1973, p. 137-140.

⁴⁰ C. Bucur, *op.cit.*, p. 68-70; V. Butură, *Străvechi mărturii de civilizație românească în Transilvania – Studiu etnografic*, București, 1989, p. 316-317

⁴¹ G. Duby, *op.cit.*, p. 212; G. Șebesta, *La vita dei mulini*, Trento, 1977, p.101-103; J. Le Goff, *Civilizația occidentului medieval*, p. 186.

⁴² *Legenda Sancti Gerardi Episcopi*, 14, I.D. Suci, R. Constantinescu, *op.cit.*, I, p. 50.

The western monk orders had certainly played a role in the spreading of the mill with vertical wheel.

A still opened problem is that of the emergence and spreading of the mill with horizontal wheel during the 10th – 12th centuries in southern Banat, coming from the Byzantine – Balkan civilization space. A clear and certain documentation regarding the topic is a priority for the historical research and medieval archaeology. The existence of specific toponymy related to the presence of mills at Domaşnea (650-m altitude) suggests the existence of such hydrological works in the mountainous Banat space.

The set of a suitable place, the building, keeping and exploitation of a mill involved juridical aspects and specific costs that made the mill from the very beginning a feudal monopoly⁴³. The 13th – 15th centuries mills from southern Banat were no exception from this rule. They were royal, nobiliary or landlords' possessions. Most of the mills had belonged to nobility. The Himfy family owned at the end of the 14th century and beginning of the 15th century an impressive number of mills, located on the Bârzava, Pogăniş and Caraş rivers. The mills from Gherteniş, Şoşdea and Halimba were also nobiliary possessions.

The mills belonging to local landlords had but rarely been recorded in written sources, except when they were objects of patrimonial conflicts. Such local landlords from a large feudal domain as was Remetea still owned mills on the Bârzava and Pogăniş rivers at the end of the 14th century⁴⁴.

The mill had played an important role in the medieval economy, in both royal and feudal exploitations and the landlords' properties. It represented a steady income source, as the peasants were forced to use the mills owned by nobility to grind their cereals. The mills on the Remetea domain, together with other mills from the same area had brought in 1372 to the Himfy family an income of 5.5 florins⁴⁵. The employees of the domain had taken in 1376 the amount of 14 florins from the mill owned by loan on the Remetea domain, which proves that the mill was producing benefits for its owner. During the 14th century, the feudal owners were holding the monopoly over the mills built on the Banat rivers.

The chancellery documents offer significant information concerning this matter. The mills and mill's places were separately recorded in the case of donations or mills separation. The right to build a mill was exclusively a feudal privilege. Breaking this right had often generated in conflicts, ended by agreements such as the 1424 one between the noblemen from Remetea and those from Halimba. The income generated by mills was a benefit of

⁴³ G. Duby, *op.cit.*, p. 212; M. Bloch, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

⁴⁴ M. Holban, *SMIM*, II, 1957, p. 413. O. Răuţ, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

⁴⁵ I. Dani, C. Feneşan, *Banatica*, 3, 1977, p. 149, 151.

the feudal lord. Significant in this respect is the 1372 act issued by Louis I, compelling all the serfs in the Timiș district to use only the royal mill for grinding⁴⁶. The loss, even temporary, of the benefits brought by the mills, because of ponds or mill destruction was followed by requests for substantial compensations. IN 1408, Stephen Himfy had accused a loss of 1000 florins, caused by the nobles from Gherteniș by stopping the work of the 24 mills from Remetea. As documented in the sources from the second half of the 14th century until the 15th century, the increase in the number of mills reflects, in our opinion, the farming progresses - at least for certain areas from Banat, an extensions of the cultivated lands, increase of efficiency but also a demographic increase.

The ovens represent, besides the household inventory, important witnesses of the Middle Ages everyday life. Medieval archaeology had documented baking ovens within the 12th – 13th centuries' settlement from Gomea⁴⁷. They were built either inside or close to the dwellings. The hearth of the oven in house no. 3 had a 0.8-m diameter, while the one of the oven in house no. 14 had a 1.3-m diameter. A 0.4-m high hemispherical cap was covering the hearths. This type of device had been well known within the Banat space and had been in use for a long period.

Given the lack of interdisciplinary researches in the medieval Banat settlements, one can only hypothesize on the cereal species cultivated in Banat. Increased use of horses, towards the end of the topical period, had probably resulted in extensive cultivation of oat.

The garden plots, usually located close the fertile area of the rivers, as in Duboz and Caransebeș, had been recorded in documents regarding patrimonial conflicts or partition of feudal domains. The yards and gardens from the Sebeș and Timiș valleys had been destroyed in 1369 by the royal army passing through the Sebeș district⁴⁸. The vineyards in southern Banat had been documented as early as the 14th century, at Subotica, Ciortea and Recaș. Two vessels with bought in 1406 by Stephen Himfy at Semlac had cost 40 florins⁴⁹.

Cattle raising had been an essential segment of the medieval economy, besides farming. The diverse, stair-like relief of southern Banat had favored the emergence of a complex rural, farming and raising based economy. Preponderance of one or another of these branches had differed, according to the environment and natural resources of the micro-zones. The Moravița Plain, an inlet - like area on the skirts the Semenic Mountains and the Caraș Plain had offered suitable conditions for both farming and

⁴⁶ C. Feneșan, *Ștefan Mateș la 80 de ani, Cluj-Napoca, 1977, p. 229.*

⁴⁷ D. Teicu, Gh. Lazarovici, *op.cit.*, p. 57, pl. 29.

⁴⁸ DRH, D. I, 1977, p. 97

⁴⁹ Pesty Fr, *Krassó*, III, p. 253; DRH, C, X, p. 371; C. Feneșan, *DMB*, p. 38-39.

animal raising. The Banat Mountains had low altitudes between 600 and 1000 meters. The ridge of the Semenic Mountains is made of a series of platforms covered with low vegetation. Marius Bizerea, in analyzing the toponymy associated with the Semenic ridges 800 to 1000m's in altitude, concluded that permanent hamlets and settlements had existed here during the 15th – 15th centuries⁵⁰. A 1392 act recording the buying of two properties, Timișelu and Hideg, located on the skirts of the Semenic and Țarcu Mountains, indirectly documents the animal raising in this area. The Romanian noble family Dees of Timișel had given, beside 200 florins, 100 oxen and 300 sheep for the above mentioned properties⁵¹. The written information from the 14th and 15th centuries hold no sufficient data for building a global image of the species and number of animals raised in the Banat households. The data in the Ehrler's study, valid for the end of the 18th century, are important in regard of the ratio of different species raised in the Banat households and their generally low size. The remains unearthed in the medieval settlements from Ilidia, Gomea, Moldova Veche and Berzovia had offered new data, in completion of the written information from the chancellery acts⁵². The faunal remains from a mid 14th century household from the Remetea domain had offered a significant image of the daily diet, in respect of the meat consumed. Domesticated hog remains were the most numerous. Bovine remains were next in range, followed by smaller quantities of ovine, goat and domestic fowl remains⁵³.

The drifts from the settlements on the Bârzava Valley, from Remetea and Șoșdea, had often been documented, starting with mid 14th century. A document from December 1343 mentions that Bratan, landlord of Șoșdea, had taken 94 sows belonging to the serfs from Remetea. The document also mentions that a swineherd tended the drift⁵⁴. The cattle and hogs belonging to the serfs from Șoșdea have been the victims of an armed conflict between the nobles from Gherteniș and those from Remetea in 1404⁵⁵. In 1409, the nobles from Duboz had forcefully taken from the serfs from Săliște, near Gherteniș, beside other goods, 57 fat hogs⁵⁶. A letter dated 1416 addressed to the count Pipo of Ozora refers to the complaint made by the landlord of Șoșdea, regarding the theft of a drift of 40 hogs from his property. The shelter built for the drift is also mentioned in the document⁵⁷.

⁵⁰ M. Bizerea, *StGB*, I, 1970, p. 261-267

⁵¹ Pesty, Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 14

⁵² G. El Susi, *op.cit.*, p. 102.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

⁵⁴ DIR, C. IV (1341-1450), p. 166-167.

⁵⁵ Pesty Fr., *Krassó*, III, p. 247-248.

⁵⁶ Ortvay, *Oklevélek Tm*, p. 405

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 518

The metric data of the hog lot from Berzovia had emphasized some of the somatic characters of the individuals. The values for the height are ranging from 0.68 to 0.80 m, slightly above the average values determined for the same species in the settlements from Ilidia and Moldova Veche. The body characteristics of the hogs raised in the 12th – 14th centuries settlements in southern Banat indicates an unbred species, with long snout, of low or middle size⁵⁸.

Taking into account the archaeological documentation, with all due prudence – given the incomplete character of the archaeological investigations, it seems that in the settlements from Ilidia, Moldova Veche and Gomea hogs had occupied the second place in range, in respect of the daily diet of the inhabitants. The greatest weight, in regard of the sacrificed individuals during the 12th – 13th centuries had been held by the bovines. The faunal remains uncovered in the 12th – 13th century's dwellings from Ilidia – *Funii*, Gomea – *Zomonite* and Moldova Veche – *Rât* had offered significant information. The metric data for the withers' height indicate 1.23 m for Moldova Veche, 1.18 m for Gomea and 1.26 m for Ilidia⁵⁹. The measurement point to gracile, low sized animals, of which structure has analogies in medieval settlements located in resembling environments from Romania. Of special importance are the observations on the estimated age of the sacrificed animals. For example, some 60 to 70% of the animals sacrificed at Berzovia, Gomea and Moldova Veche were aged 4 and over. This fact indicates that they were used as draft animals as long as they had a proper condition. The written documents regarding a fertile zone as the middle Bârzava course had frequently recorded until mid 14th century the cattle as object of disputes and altercations between local landlords. In 1376, the Himfies had accused a nobleman called Neacșu of Cuiești of forcefully taking of four oxen and a grain-filled cart⁶⁰. The consequences of the conflicts between the Remetea noblemen and the neighboring nobles or Cuiești castellans had been supported by the serfs on the Remetea domain. The nobles of Halimba had entered in 1406 and again in 1410 into the neighboring Șoșdea domain and taken the serf's draft animals⁶¹. Another record mentions the five oxen taken from the serfs living in *Bachtuwise* (*quinque boues de eorum proprio ac iobagiorum ipsorum aratris quator boues excepissent*).

The chancellery documents had rarely mentioned the sheep flocks, as objects of transactions of patrimonial conflicts. In 1406 and 1407, the Remetea noblemen had been forcefully dispossessed of sheep flocks⁶².

⁵⁸ G. El Susi, *op.cit.*, p. 127.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 93-102.

⁶⁰ Pesty Fr, *Krassó*, III, p. 129-130

⁶¹ Orvay, *Oklevélek Tm*, p. 437.

⁶² Pesty Fr, *Krassó*, III, p. 259.

The archaeological and written documentation does not enable objective estimations of the size of the flocks tended in southern Banat. Domestic fowl had also been archaeologically documented for the medieval households in Ilidia and Remetea⁶³. Except for very few documents, like those issued in 1416 and 1503 mentioning the pigsties (*stabulum*), no records of the animal shelters in the Banat households have been kept. Neither has medieval archaeology brought any information on the topic. A description of a pigsty has to be mentioned here as a useful ethnographic reference, the one made by J.J. Ehrler. It consisted in encirclement made of posts stuck into soil and covered with reed⁶⁴.

The mainly mountainous relief of southern Banat had influenced a stair-like disposal of vegetation, sheltering a diverse fauna. A 1400 issued document records the falcon hunting practiced by the Banat noblemen⁶⁵. Archaeo-zoological investigations had offered useful data regarding the species fish and hunted within the medieval settlements' areas. Fishing has been documented as a permanent occupation of the community from Moldova Veche – Râț and has been practiced by the inhabitants of Remetea in the 14th century or of Ilidia in the 12th – 13th centuries. Nets were used at the end of the 14th century for fishing in Bârzava, according to a document regarding the Remetea domain⁶⁶.

Deer and wild boar were the species mostly hunted in the Danube Valley, from Gomea to Moldova Veche. Hunting of certain rodents as the beaver or carnivores as the marten and the badger is also documented. Deer have been hunted in the woods on the skirts of the Anina Mountains, within the boundaries of the settlement from Ilidia and on the forested surroundings of Remetea. Certainly documented during the 8th century at Gomea, it seems that the aurochs were yet hunted in the 13th and 14th centuries in the vicinity of Ilidia⁶⁷. Faunal remains indicate that all the medieval communities archaeologically documented in southern Banat had hunted the wild boar. Given the partial character of the archaeological investigation of settlements in southern Banat, one can not globally estimate the statistical weight of either of the hunted species. Archaeology can offer but references to the species still existent and hunted during the Middle Age. For example, a giant bear had been hunted sometimes during the 14th century in the Bârzava Valley, in the vicinity of Remetea. One should not be surprised, since the bounding act for the Remetea – Ersig

⁶³ G. El Susi, *op.cit.*, p. 133-134

⁶⁴ J.J. Ehrler, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

⁶⁵ Doc.Val., p. 529.

⁶⁶ I. Dani, C. Feneșan, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

⁶⁷ G. El Susi, *op.cit.*, p. 139: the hypothesis of the uruses' existence and hunting in the 12th – 13th centuries mountainous Banat is not sufficiently backed by scientific proofs

domain dated 1369 records a tributary of the Pogăniș River named *The Bears' Creek*⁶⁸.

Exploitation of the ores from the Banat Mountains had doubtlessly played an extremely important role in the medieval economy of southern Banat. The ores are to be found on an alignment between Bocșa – Oravița – Moldova Nouă. The mines from Ocna de Fier and Dognecea from the Dognecea Mountains had bounded the main area of iron ore exploitation. The deposits from the Dognecea Mountains, of which exploitation began in the antiquity, had been an important metal resource for the Roman Empire during the 4th century. The exploitation of the deposits from the Dognecea Mountains had greatly been reduced during the Middle Age, at least until their recording in written sources. The mines from southern part of these mountains had been recorded at the middle of the 14th century as royal property. The acts issued in 1351 and 1358 regarding the Secăș and Biniș villages mention the royal mines from that area (*montane regalis Sekusbanya*), named Baia Secășului and Baia (nowadays Ocna de Fier)⁶⁹.

The positioning of the Cuiști royal fortress in the Bârzava Valley in the first half of the 14th century had also intended the control over the mining area from the Dognecea Mountains. A document issued in 1395 specifically mentions this royal fortress and the iron exploitations within its jurisdiction (*castrum Kwesd vocatum in comitatu de Crassow habitum, cum villis et montani ferri, ad ipsum castrum spectantibus*)⁷⁰. The narrow and low tunnels near Dognecea and Ocna de Fier could have been mined during the Middle Age. Exploitation of ores at Ciclova, in the Oravița area is documented as early as 1437.

Medieval using of minor ores had been documented for the Banat area. Lenses of ferruginous mineralization had been identified near Ilidia as concretionary limonite⁷¹. These iron "hats" have originated in the oxidation area of the ores and are to be found on the surface or just below it, so that the medieval craftsmen could easily use them.

A 12th century metallurgical workshop had been unearthed at Gomea, in the Danube Iron gates area⁷². It was a simple building, having 3.25 by 2.30 meters (Fig. 45). The furnace was located in one of the corners. Only the hearth of 0.75 by 0.80 m and part of the burnt walls of this structure were preserved. This structure has analogies in the 11th – 12th centuries

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 103; DRH, C, XIII (1366-1370), p. 582.

⁶⁹ DIR, C, XI, (1356-1360), p. 285; V. Achim, *Banatica*, 12/2, 1993, p. 59

⁷⁰ Ortvay, *Oklevélek Tm*, p. 250-251.

⁷¹ E. Stoicovici, *Banatica*, 6, 1981, p. 175.

⁷² D. Țeicu, Gh. Lazarovici, *op.cit.*, p. 102-105.

workshops within and outside the Carpathian Basin⁷³. Typologically, it is to be assigned to a series of simple, archaic furnaces used from the Late Iron Age until the Middle Age. The 12th century metallurgical workshop from Gornea had doubtlessly used the above mentioned iron “hats”, the more so as magnetite, hematite and limonite sources had been identified in this area. Remnants of metallurgical procedures had been found, for example, in the Vicinic Valley at Ilidia and Berliște, in the Ciclova Valley at Vraniuț.

The household tools and utensils, spurs and harness components, diverse implements and even some of the ornaments found in the necropolises and settlements stand for the artisanship in southern Banat. The information in the written sources, luxury adornments and monetary circulation document the trade with central European and southern Danube areas. The chancellery acts from the 14th century had recorded artisans working for both the Banat rural settlements and feudal courts. A 1362 document had recorded the blacksmiths and leatherworkers from a village named *Zeradaheľ*⁷⁴. Primary information on artisans and also on the luxury items bought for the Remetea court are to be found in an accountancy list dated either 1372 or 1378. The document had recorded the work of several artisans: carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, leatherworkers, tailors and even of a braider (*filator ligaturarum*)⁷⁵. No information had been kept on the work of the medieval Banat masons. Archaeological documentation suggests that stonemasons had contributed to the building of certain parish churches, as the one from Remetea. The existence of such yards belonging to the Franciscan monasteries had often offered a solution for those wanting to raise a monument⁷⁶.

The attire accessories from the Remetea court or the household tools from the 14th century dwellings from Ilidia had been manufactured by rural workshops (Fig. 48). The implements unearthed within the heart of Banat settlements are also local products. Significant quantities of metal were evidently requested by the making of weapons, arrowheads and spurs. Such finds had been recorded at Gornea (dated to the 12th – 13th centuries), Ilidia (same period) and Remetea. Within the mountainous area of Banat, swords have been discovered at Jupa, Măru and another unknown location (find in the Vrșac Museum). The finds from Jupa and Poiana Măru had

⁷³ G. Novaki, *AAH*, 21, 1969, p. 300-331; V. Souchopova, *The Beginnings of the metallurgy of iron among western slavs in the light of sources from Moravia*, Bmo, 1995, p. 35-49.

⁷⁴ DRH, C. 12, (1361-1365), p. 69-70.

⁷⁵ I. Dani, C. Feneșan, *op.cit.*, p. 150-151

⁷⁶ V. Vătășianu, *op. cit.*, p. 149, R. Popa, *Pagini de veche artă românească*, 4, 1981, p. 79 seq.

been assigned to the end of the 13th century, possibly the beginning of the 14th century⁷⁷.

In the Danube area of Banat, several goldsmiths' workshops had been identified as sources of the minor art products: lock-rings, rings and torque-shaped bracelets. The find of a mold in the vicinity of Vrșac, used for shaping silver plates to be worn on the forehead proves the existence of a local center producing this type of adornments. This kind of adornments had been in fashion on both sides of the Danube starting with the 12th century⁷⁸.

The inhabitants of the rural Banat settlements had also shaped bones and horns, in order to create utilitarian, household items. Carefully shaped bone knife - handles, needles and other accessories had been found in the dwellings from Ilidia – *Funii* (12th – 13th centuries), Ilidia – *Săliște* (14th century) and Berzovia.

Common ceramics is an ever-present part of the archaeological inventories of both rural dwellings and feudal residences, proving that pottery had been a primary artisanship during the 10th – 14th centuries. The evolution of the ceramics and of the pottery centers from Banat during the 10th – 11th centuries is rather diffused, given the extent of the investigation of settlements. The archaeological excavation in the settlements from Gornea, Ilidia and Moldova Veche had offered information on 12th – 13th centuries ceramics. Starting with the 14th century, documents had recorded potters and pottery trade⁷⁹. A 12th century pottery had been identified in the heart of the medieval settlement from Gornea⁸⁰. The single-roomed workshop had the floor partly dug into soil (Fig. 47). The kiln had two rooms, separated by a grate. It can be typologically assigned to the series of two-roomed kilns and vertical draft, in use from prehistory until the Middle Age⁸¹ (Fig. 46). Its rather modest dimensions indicate that the pottery from Gornea had only produced for the local community and perhaps for some neighboring settlements. The find from Gornea is significant for the knowledge of both medieval economy and technology.

As mentioned above, the archaeological investigations from Gornea, Moldova Veche and Ilidia had offered references for the knowledge of 12th – 13th centuries Banat ceramics. Vessels were made of clay mixed

⁷⁷ Z. Pinter, *SCIVA*, 2, 1986, p. 184-188.

⁷⁸ D. Teicu, *Banatica*, 12/1, 1993, p. 242

⁷⁹ In *Doc.Val.*, p. 222-223, the household of a potter (*Benedictus lutiferis*) from Ersig had been recorded: pottery trade is documented on the Remetea domain in 1372, according to I. Dani, C. Feneșan, *op.cit.*, p. 150

⁸⁰ I. Uzum, D. Teicu, *ActaMN*, XV, 1978, p. 296-300

⁸¹ N.J. Stave, *Dictionnaire archéologique des techniques*, I, Paris, 1963, p. 242; J. Duhamel, *Acta PA*, 9/10, 1979, p. 72; S. Baraschi, *SCIVA*, 25, 3, 1974, p. 464-470, O. Toropu, *op.cit.*, p. 154, plate 20.

with varying proportions of sand and mica, resulting in a sandy aspect. Most of the unearthed ceramics was wheel made. Burning ceramics is brown, brownish – black and brick red, depending on the intensity and type of burning process. The typology is extremely modest for this time span. The simple pot, also known as jar in the archaeological literature represents the typical ceramic form, ever to be found in dwellings' inventories. Several typological criteria had been advanced for the 12th – 13th centuries pots, according to their height, diameter and lips' profile. Ornamentation of the pots usually consists in incisions and impressions, located on the upper half of the vessel. Decoration repertoire mainly consists in groups of simple incised lines, sometimes associated with impressions. Beside this type of pots, the inventories of the dwellings from southern Banat also display clay pots with trapezoidal section, horizontal lip and two ears. Such pots had been found in the remnants of the pottery from Gomea and in 12th – 13th centuries dwellings from Ilidia and Berzovia – *Pătruieni*. Some of the medieval ceramic vessels found in Banat display certain symbols on the bottom. Some of the 12th – 13th century's vessels from Gomea had a cross or a swastika shaped on the bottom. Their signification is not yet clear, as these signs had been interpreted as either potter's signs, magic marks or simple ornaments⁸². Given the fact that the potter mark had frequently been utilized along the Middle Ages, one can accept as plausible the assumption that these signs on the bottom of the vessels are representing mark of the potters. The Banat medieval ceramics have close analogies in respect of form, paste and ornamentation in the similar finds from Transylvania, Oltenia and the area south of Danube⁸³.

The rather poor inventories of some dwellings also contain, starting with the 12th century, enameled ceramics. There are very few such findings dated to the 11th – 12th centuries in the Danubian area of Banat and one can only cite those from Gomea – *Zomonite* and Drobeta Turnu Severin⁸⁴. The fragmentary ceramics from Gomea could only provide information for the reconstitution of a pitcher and a mug both undecorated. The vessels were made of clay mixed with sand and coated with green enamel. The enameled ceramics dated to the 12th – 13th centuries found in the Banat settlements had a greater weight as compared with the previous period. It has been documented in the Danube Corridor at Tumu Severin, Gomea,

⁸² M. Comșa, *SCIV*, 13, 2, 1961, p. 298 seq.; P. Diaconu, D. Vâlceanu, *Păcuilui lui Soare*, I, București, 1972, p. 133

⁸³ O. Toropu, *op.cit.*, p. 171, plates 15-16; R. Popa, *Țara Hațegului*, p. 66-68; D. Minić, *Balkanoslavica*, 3, 1974, p. 60-72; idem, *Sirmium*, 11, 1980, p. 24; V. Bikić, *Srednjovekovna keramika Beograda*, Belgrade, 1994, p. 44.

⁸⁴ C. Nicolaescu, *SCIVA*, 6, 2, 1959, p. 86; B. Slătineanu, *Studii de artă populară*, București, 1972, p. 96, fig. 1, 3, plate V; D. Teicu, *SCIVA*, 34, 3, 1983, p. 283 seq.

and Moldova Veche and in the settlements from Mehadia, Ilidia and Gherteniș, within the mountainous space of Banat (Fig. 49). Pitchers with long neck and round body are to be found in all medieval settlements (Fig. 50). They had been decorated in the so-called "hom" technique, with white circles set in diverse patterns. Beside pitchers, mugs and bowls with ring-shaped foot can also be found in the dwellings' inventories. The enamel on the 13th – 14th centuries ceramics from Banat was monochrome, olive – green colored. Other decorative motifs, also used on common ceramics, were the grooves, impressions and plastic applications.

Another important problem, which medieval archaeology had answered was the identification of the enameled pottery centers from Banat⁸⁵. It has already been proved that the settlement from Gomea had been a center of production for the olive green colored enameled ceramics during the 13th – 14th centuries. Observation of the 14th century enameled ceramics from Ilidia had pointed to form, paste and decoration analogies with the common ceramics, standing for the existence of another production center in this area. The local Banat artisans had assimilated enameling technique during the 13th – 14th centuries. Accumulations in the technique of making enameled ceramic had been determined by the impulses coming from the important centers of the Byzantine – Balkan world. The active policy of the Byzantine Empire during the 11th – 12th centuries concerning the Danube line had doubtlessly favored economic and cultural exchanges with southeastern European space. Circulation of people, ideas and cultural and material goods during the 13th – 14th centuries along the "cultural corridors" connecting the Banat space with the Balkans had greatly contributed to the setting of the enameled ceramic centers⁸⁶.

Luxuries' import at the end of the 14th century had been recorded. At Remetea, on the Bârzava Valley, silk, velvet and cloth had been brought from afar, from Cologne or Bohemia⁸⁷. For the same domain, spices were brought from the Orient. Fragments of glass vessels found in the 12th – 13th centuries dwellings from Ilidia and Gomea could suggest their import from Byzantine or central European centers.

Active traders during the 14th century the Genovese had added the Banat, given its geographical location, to their trading routes. A 1279 act was strengthening the Genovese traders' right to circulation free of customs, with the goods brought from the Black Sea towards Hungary. The Genovese trading route was following *the Danube course and on land, coming from*

⁸⁵ D. Teicu, *Kulturraum Mitteleben und unteren Donau*, Reșița, 1995, p. 149-153.

⁸⁶ R. Theodorescu, *op.cit.*, p. 340.

⁸⁷ I. Dani, C. Feneșan, *op.cit.*, p. 151. *item domino Bano comparui decem wlnas pannorum Coloniensium; item domino nostro videliel magistro Nicolao comparui secundum dimidium wlnas pareni bochemicali LXVI denarios.*

Orșova towards Timișoara and to Buda. Given its favorable geographical location, the city of Orșova had an important trading and customs position during the 14th century. King Louis I had stopped in 1373 the transport of the salt from the Transylvanian mines on the commercial route from Orșova to Timișoara⁸⁸. Documents from the end of the 14th century had recorded a measure specific to the Banat: *cubulus Themessiensis*⁸⁹.

The gaps in the historical sources regarding the characteristics and extent of the trading during the 11th - 14th centuries enables very small possibilities of reconstituting this aspect of the medieval economy. It had been estimated that the 11th – 14th centuries rural communities from Hateg, an area neighbor to the mountainous Banat and analogous resources and geographical characteristics, had produced only the strict necessities of food. Reserves could be made only from raised animals, a domain in which the Romanian villages owed certain taxes and obligations⁹⁰.

An attempt to estimate the reserves that could be traded by the southern Banat rural communities is completely hypothetical. Exchanges doubtlessly took place during the 11th – 14th centuries, as the coins found in settlements and necropolises prove, but their nature and amount are hard to be defined. Starting with the 14th century, written documents record the existence of zonal fairs (*forum provinciali*) in Banat. Such markets have been held in 1330 for example on the Bârzava Valley at *Bodugazum folua* and Șemlac, at *Ersumlov* (nowadays Vrșac), *Tyvised* and *Sredișteea Mare*⁹¹. Some of these fairs, for example that held at *Bodugazum folua* had again been mentioned in 1343 and 1370, on the occasion of some conflicts that took place during the fair⁹². Other settlements benefiting of favorable economic conditions and a demographic increase could have also held zonal fairs, but no written document mentions them. For the first half of the 15th century, documents had recorded 13 settlements in Banat that with a higher rank than villages, that of *oppidum*, where fairs were held⁹³.

Location of certain settlements along the natural routes of communication, as those from Orșova, Mehadia, Sebeș, Caran and Lugoj for example, had favored the holding of fairs. The net of medieval roads

⁸⁸ Pesty, Fr., Szörény, III, p. 6: the letter of the king to the wife and brothers of Benedict Himfy: *sales transalpini nequam in regnum nostrum adducantur*.

⁸⁹ I. Dani, C. Feneșan, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

⁹⁰ R. Popa, *op.cit.*, p. 207.

⁹¹ Gy. Györty, III, p. 488. *Per fore provincialia eiusdem Comitatu, videlicet in foro Mezeusumlou, in villa Budugazunnfalva, Erthsumou, Tyvysed et foro Zeredahel . . convocassnet*.

⁹² DIR, C, XIV, (1341-1350), p. 175; Pesty, Fr., Szörény, III, p. 99: *consuetum forum*.

⁹³ St. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, II, p. 135.

had certainly also determined the location of the market places. The little information from the written sources and the data offered by the field research offer the basis for the reconstitution of the 13th – 15th centuries main arteries. The Banat had represented a link between the Pannonian Plain and the southeastern European space and further, along the Danube, with the Black Sea area. The mentioned 1349 documents regarding the Genovese trading is also mentioning a major artery between Orşova and Buda, passing through Timișoara. Part of this artery passing through the mountainous area of Banat, Between Orşova, Mehadia and Caransebeș was superposing the route of an important Roman artery, connecting the antique Dierna and Tibiscum. The route of the Roman road starting from nowadays Jupa, near Caransebeș (Tibiscum) towards Ciuta on the Bistra Valley had been mentioned in a bounding act from 1411 (*magnam viam in cacuminibus eorundum moncium*)⁹⁴. The other Roman artery started from Lederata on the Danube, avoiding the mountainous area on the western side, through Iam – Vărădia – Berzovia, and reached also Tibiscum⁹⁵. Part of this artery had been used also during the 13th – 15th centuries. As early as the end of the 13th century an important road started at Horom, towards Subotica and Vrșac (*magnam viam ab Armenis in Horom ducentem*)⁹⁶. Its northward route avoided the hills from Vrșac, crossed the Moravița Plain and reached Șemlac. During the Middle Age, the Roman routes along the Caraș and Cionovăț valleys, from Iam, Vărădia, Surduc, Fizeș to Berzovia and the branch passing through Doclin and Biniș and reaching Bocșa had probably been also used. A 1351 bounding act regarding the Biniș property confirms the use of the Roman road between Biniș and Bocșa⁹⁷. A bridge over Bârzava at Șemlac had been built as early as the end of the 13th century⁹⁸. From Șemlac started another road, along the Bârzava Valley through Șoșdea; from Ersig, along the Pogăniș River, it crossed the last ramifications of the Dognecea Mts. and reached Lugoj⁹⁹.

The Almăj Depression was communicating with the southern Banat space through a transversal road, following the route of a Roman road. From the main artery starting from the Danube two local routes branched along the Vicinic and Nera valleys, met again close of Slatina Nera and

⁹⁴ DRH, C, IV, (1341-1350), p. 486. Pesty Fr, Krassó, III, p. 275: the act issued on August 10, 1411.

⁹⁵ O. Răuț, O. Bozu, R. Petrovsky, *Banatica*, 4, 1977, p. 141-144.

⁹⁶ Gy. Györffy, III, p. 482.

⁹⁷ V. Achim, *Banatica*, 12/2, 1993, p. 59

⁹⁸ Gy. Györffy, III, p. 494

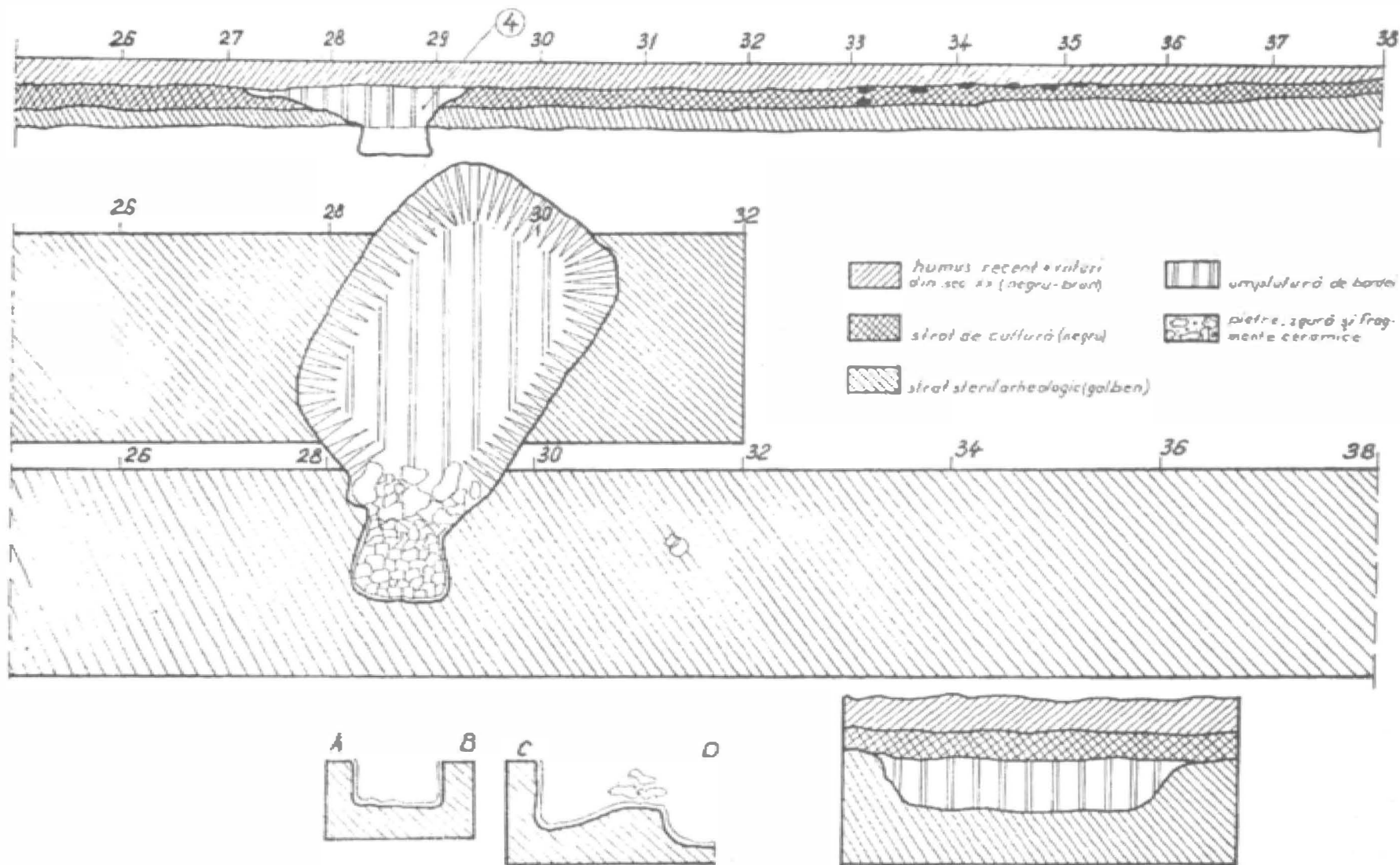
⁹⁹ DRH, C, XIII, (1366-1370), p. 581-582 on a large road, which runs from the above mentioned Ersig property toward Șemlac ... the road going from Ersig to Lugoj.

crossed the mining area to reach Șopotu Nou. The road crossing the Nera River at Sasca to reach the Almăj Depression is documented by a 1367 document¹⁰⁰. (Fig. 51)

Beside the main arteries, connecting the Danube area with the northern Banat plain, there were other local routes between the villages. They have been also documented, in some cases as boundary marks, like in the case of the Biniș property, where the route to Bănia was mentioned in 1351, or the Secaș property in 1358 and other records of such routes¹⁰¹.

¹⁰⁰ DRH, C, XIII, 1994, p. 357: *latam viam ultra fluvium Nyarag*; Gy. Györty, *op.cit.*, III, p. 475.

¹⁰¹ DRH, C, X, p. 138: *quandam parvam viam*. p. 61 – a road coming from the Gamza village; DRH, C, XII, p. 11 – two roads close to Bănia; V. Achim, *Banatica*, 12/2, 1993, p. 58: *via que venit de Banya*.

Fig. 45. Gornea. Plan of a metallurgic workshop (12th century).

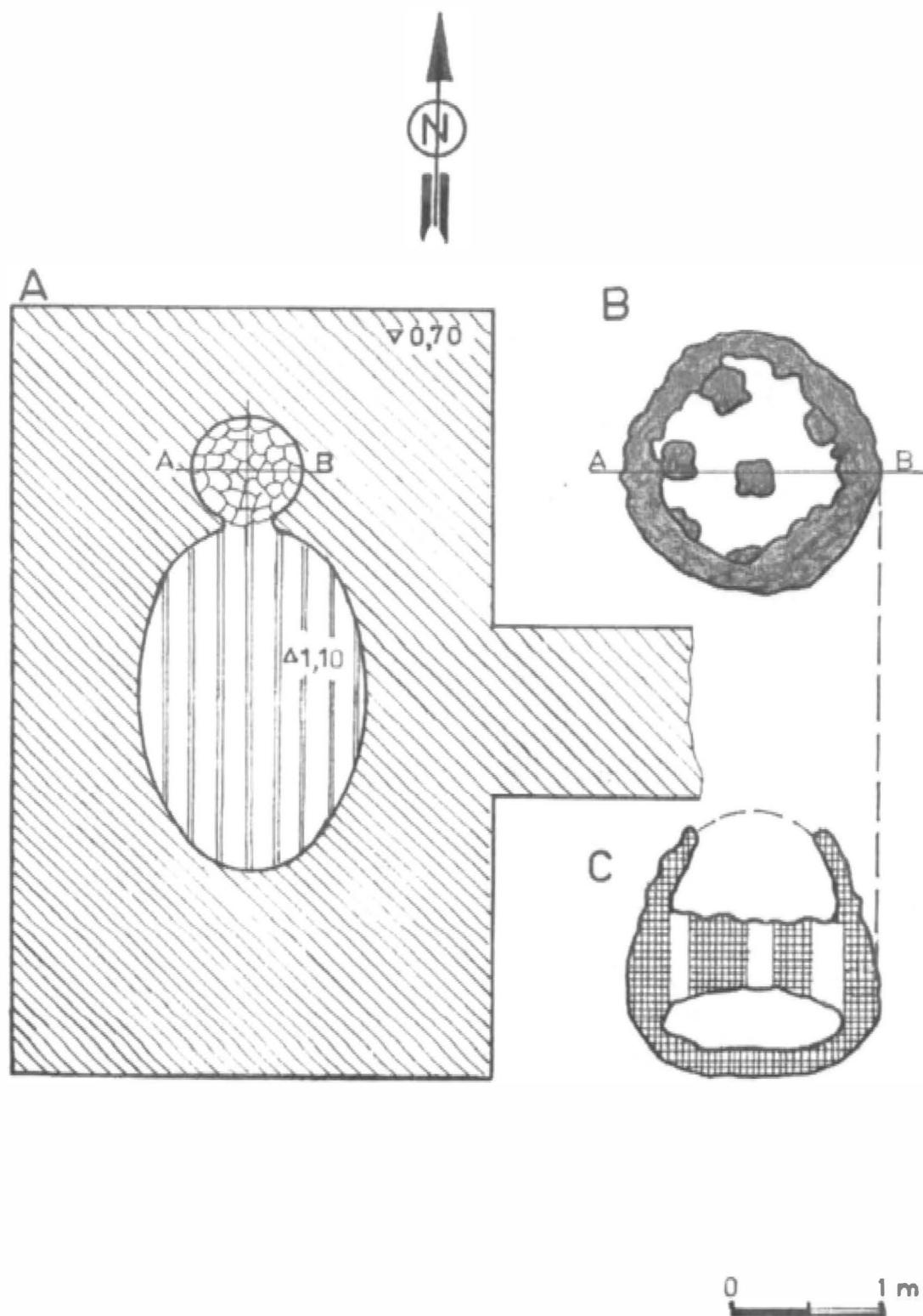


Fig. 46. Gornea. Plan of a pottery workshop (12th century).

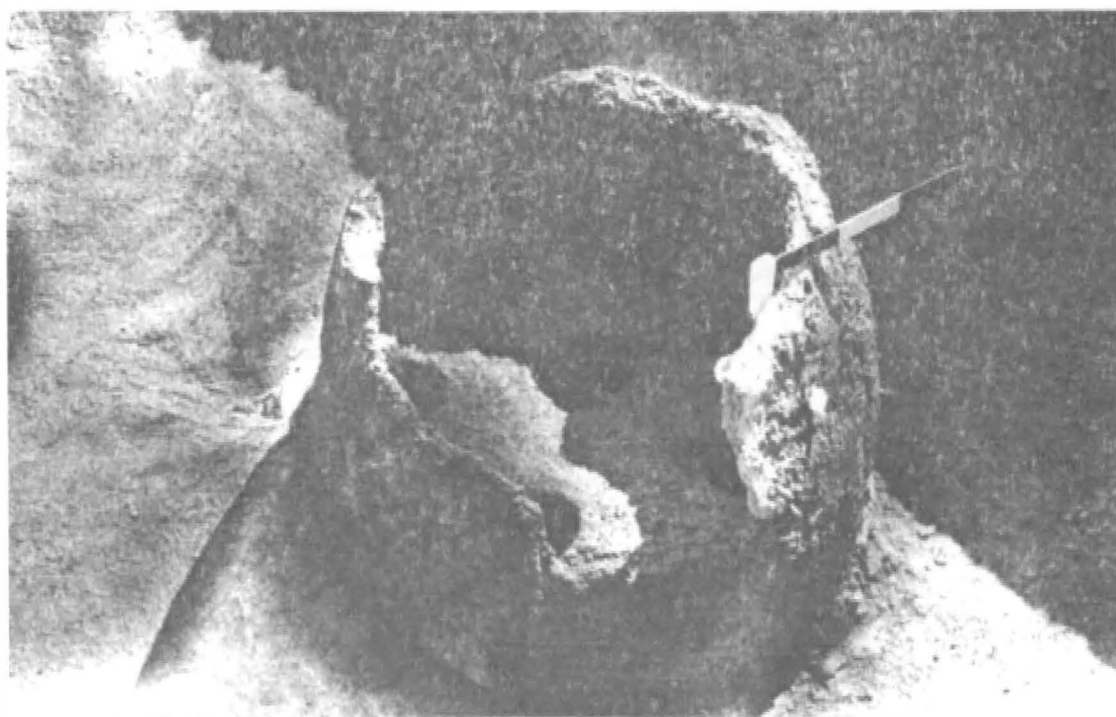
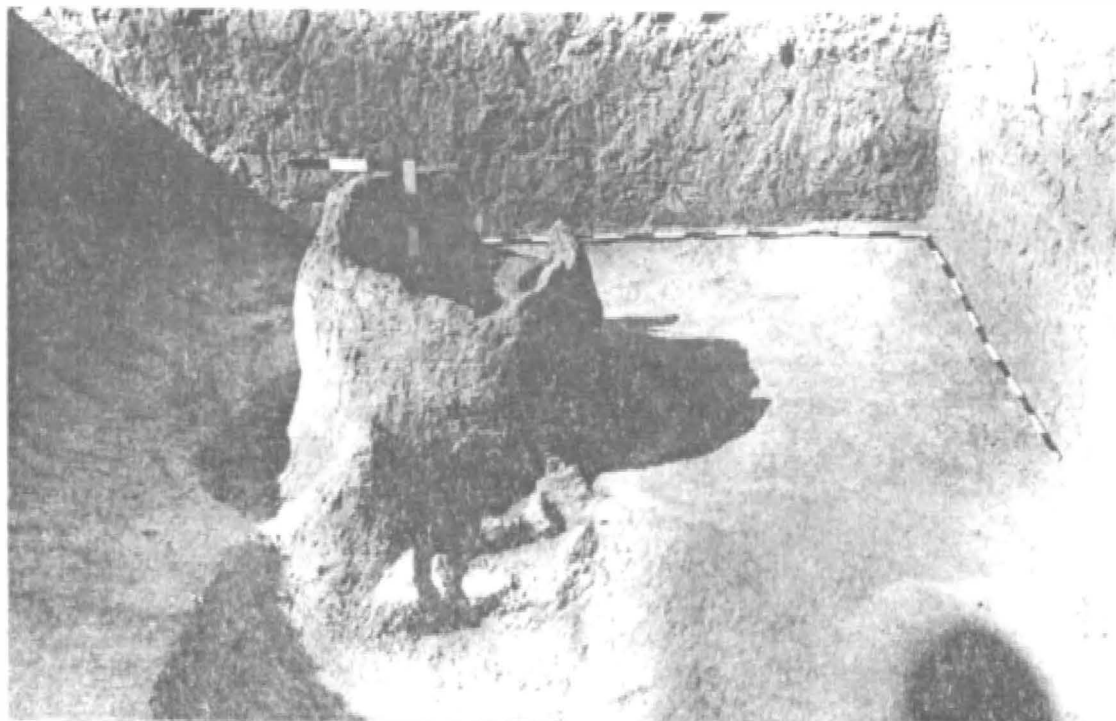


Fig. 47. Gornea. Pottery workshop.

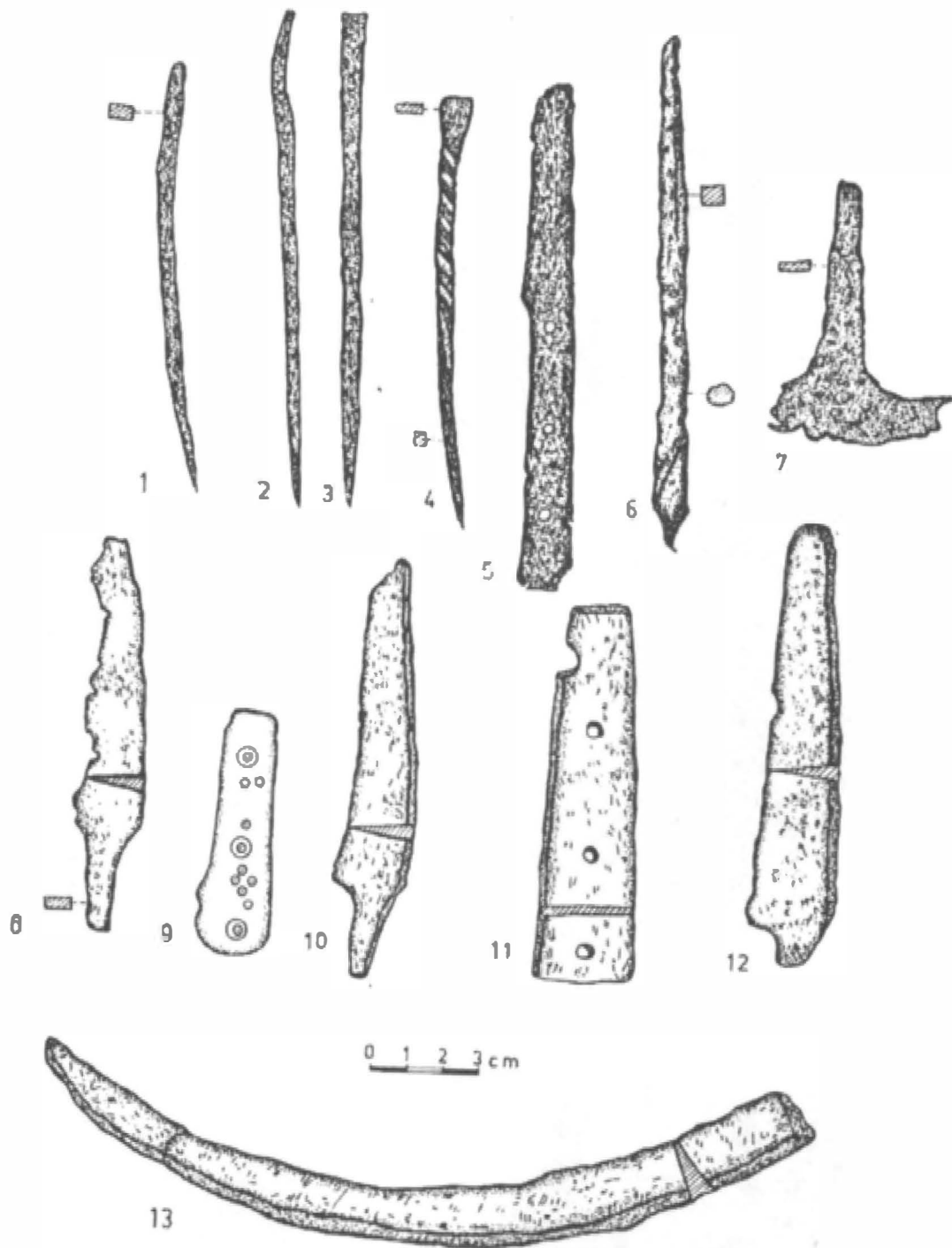


Fig. 48. Tools and household objects discovered at Remetea (Berzovia) – 14th century.

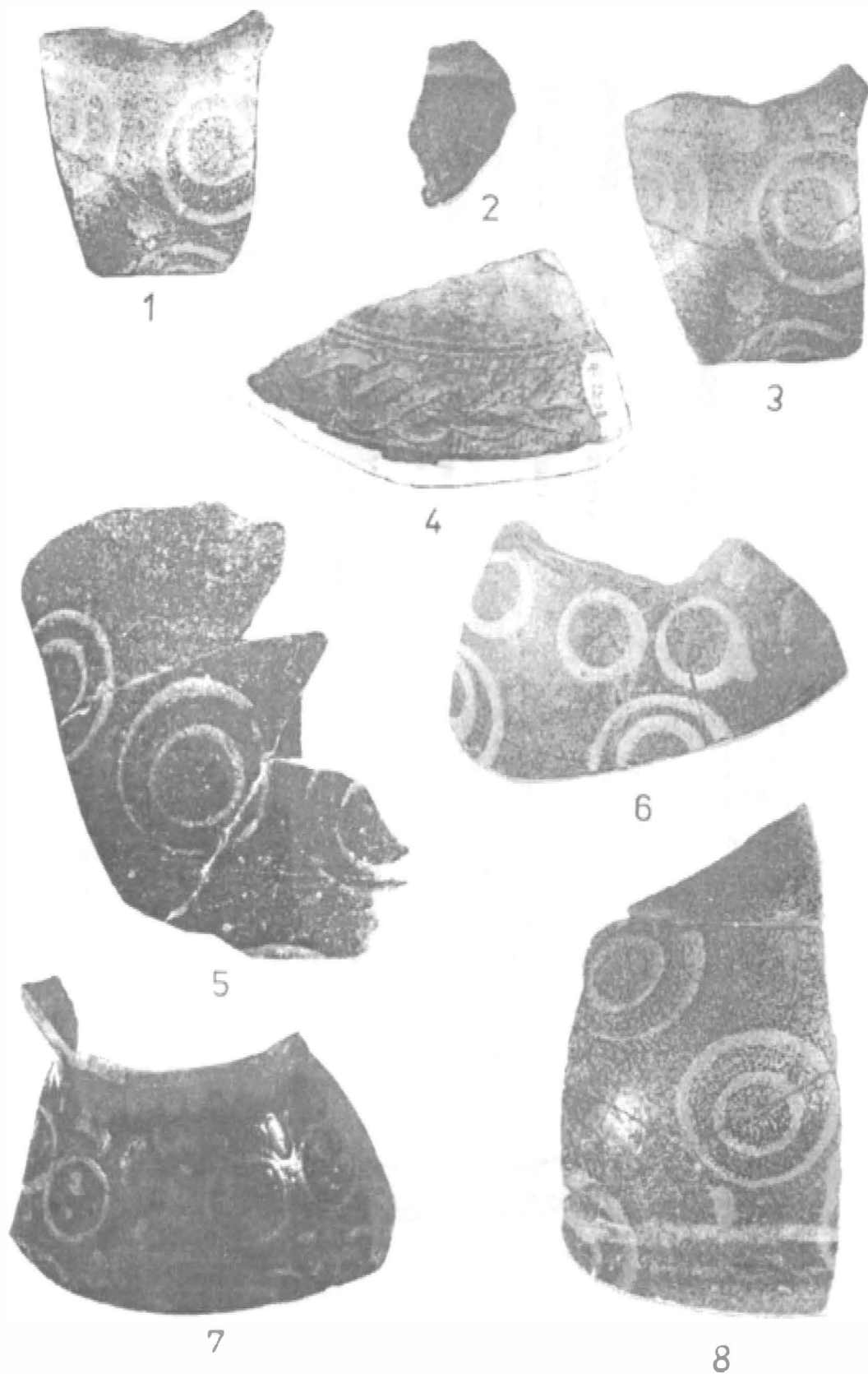


Fig. 49. Gornea. Enameled ceramics.

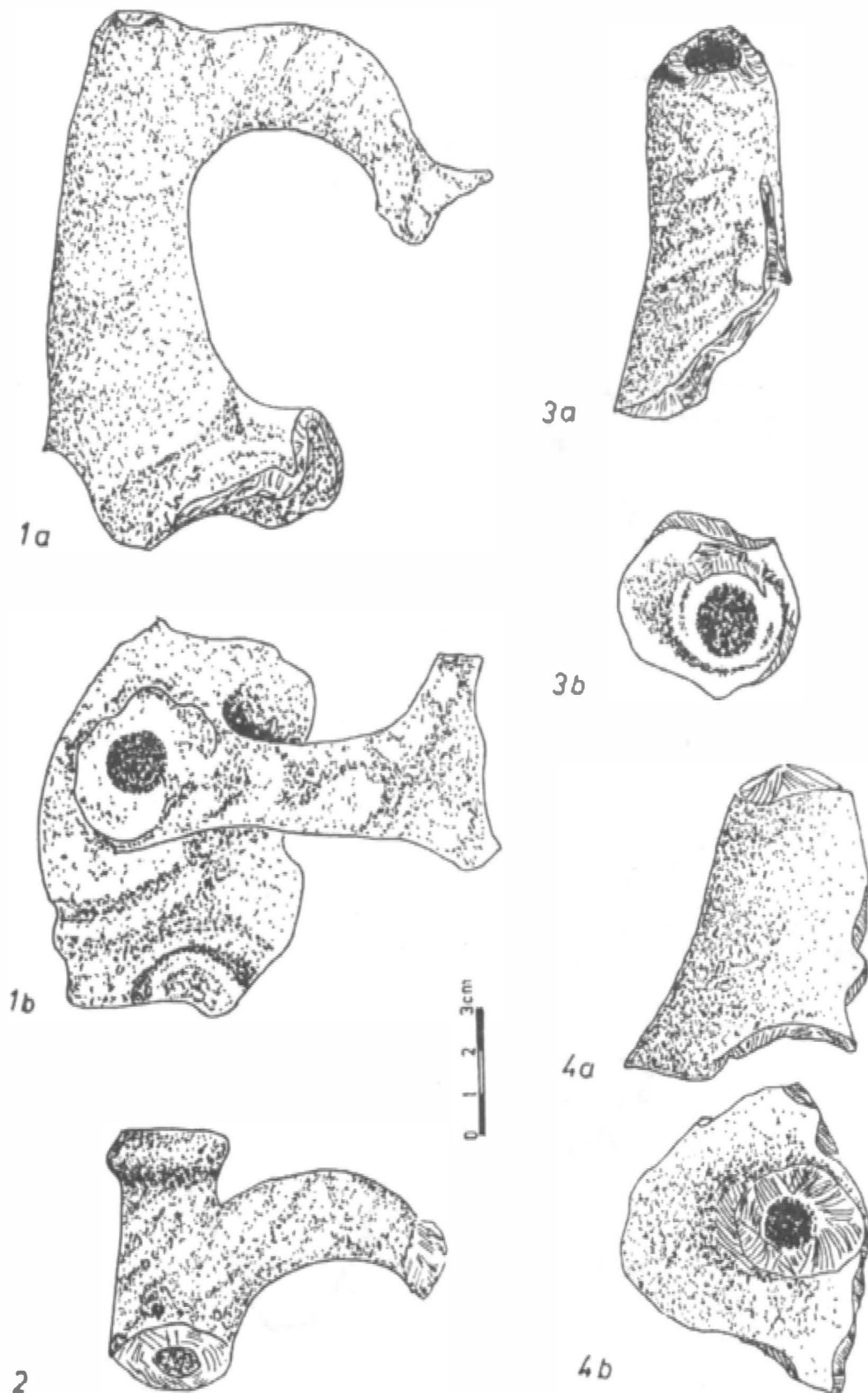


Fig. 50. Ilidia – Săliște. Enameled ceramics (14th century).

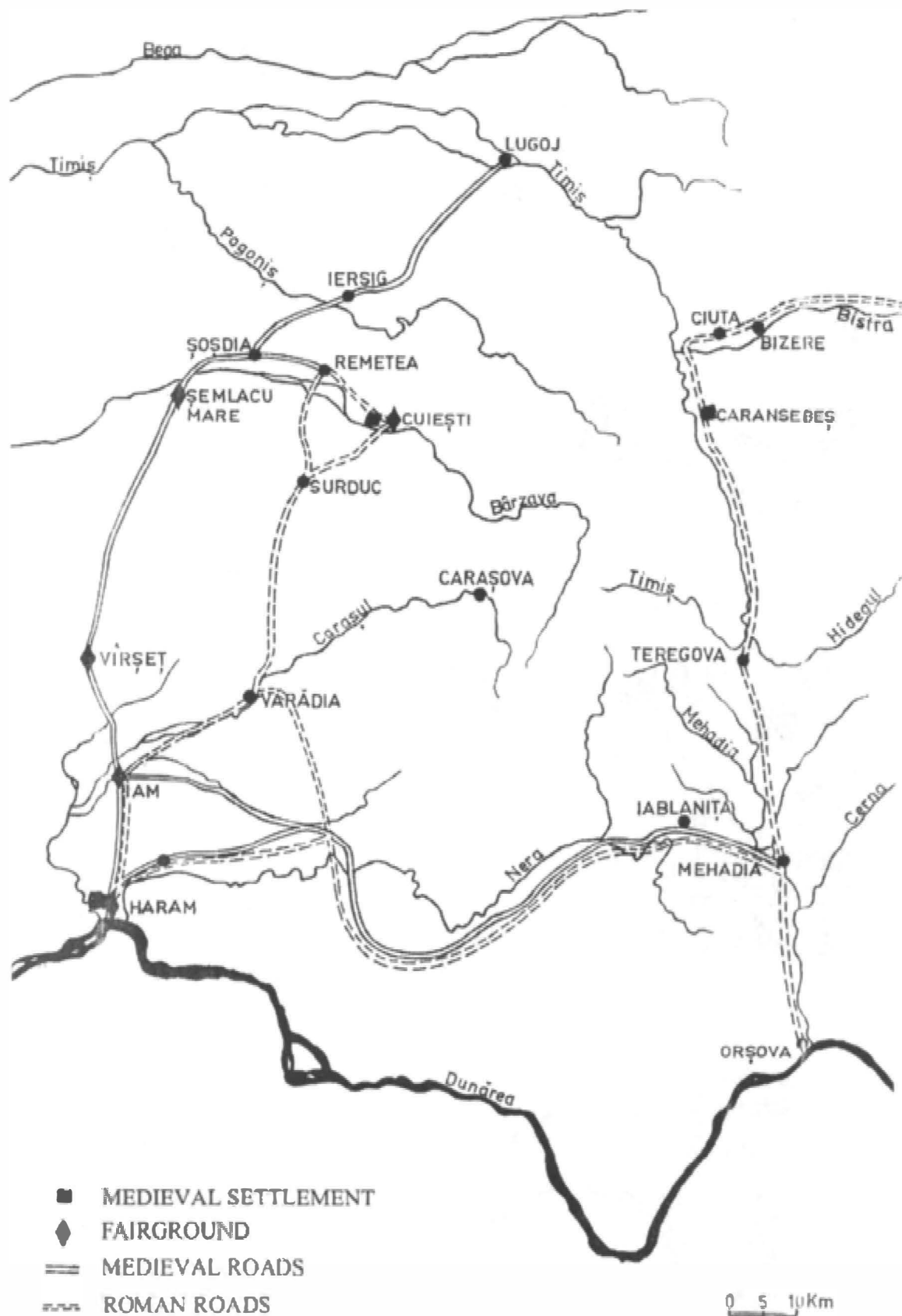


Fig. 51. Medieval routes and fairs in the Mountainous Banat.

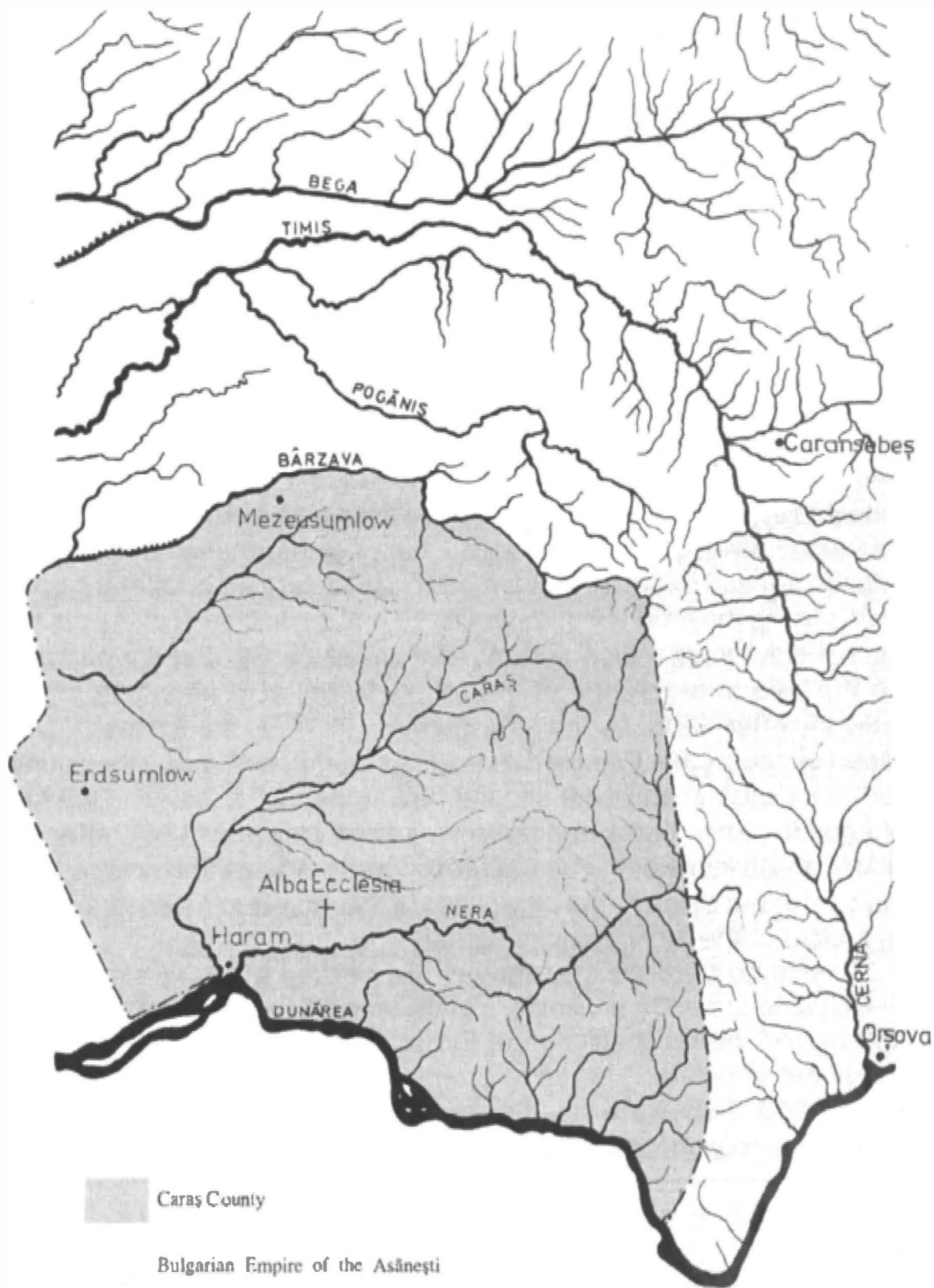


Fig. 52. The Caras County and the Bulgarian Empire of the Asănești dynasty.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION OF THE TERRITORY. MEDIEVAL INSTITUTIONS

1. Caraș County

Administrative organization of the mountainous territory of the southern Banat has been approached in historiography in the historical context created in Banat at the beginning of the 11th, after the lord Ahtum's defeat and a new religious and administrative order had imposed. One has considered that organizing the bishopric of Cenad in the space between the Danube and the Mureș had been related to the organization of a big county subsequently divided into small units¹. Lacunal information from written historical sources concerning this matter had determined different opinions concerning the moment of appearance and organization of the county Caraș. An older supposition recently discussed by Gy. Györffy had promoted the idea of organizing of the county Caraș as a boundary region immediately after 1008, by the king Ștefan². In 1177, the fortress Caraș had been certified (*villa Emelka Carasuensis castri*), that is why the county started to be organized in the second half of the 12th century³. One has considered that the county had been organized only after 1241, after the great Mongolian invasion⁴. The data registered in the written sources can not sustain, in our opinion, the organizing of the county in a period anterior to the middle of the 12th century. (Fig. 52)

Information from the 13th century has offered a few references for the delimitation of the Caraș county's boundaries in the space of the southern Banat and the reconstitution of the political-administrative history of this territorial structure. The first known county, Weith, had been mentioned in 1200. Subsequently, the chieftains of Caraș, Grigore, Toma's son, had been registered in 1255, and Anselm in 1277⁵. The village Voila

¹ Kristó Gyula, *A vármegyék kialakulása Magyarországon*, Budapest, 1988, p. 459-461.

² Szentlár J., *Krassó vármegye őshajdona*, p. 107; Gy. Györffy, *op. cit.*, III, p. 471.

³ Pesty, *Krassó*, I, p. 87-88. Kristó Gy., *op. cit.*, p. 467.

⁴ Kristó Gy., *op. cit.*, p. 467.

⁵ Györffy, *op. cit.*, III, p. 488.

belonging to the fortress Caraș, had been mentioned in 1234 and 1247 "*Woyla iuxta Danubium... a castro de Crassou exemptam*" and the village Pinar in 1241⁶. The administrative organization of the territory during the 13th century had taken place in the same time with new organizational structures characteristic to the Catholic Church. The archdeacon of Caraș, subordinated to the Bishopric from Cenad, had been already organized in 1285⁷.

The boundaries of Caraș County at the end of the 13th century are only supposed to be because there are a few references in the chancery acts. Their reconstitution on the basis of information about the catholic parishes registered in the list of tithes gathering during 1333-1335⁸. The 13 parishes of the archdeacon of Caraș have been located in the plain zone along the western hills in the Bârzava valley to the hills of Vrșac and of Oravița. The parishes identified at Denta, Sângeorge and Șemlac mark out the northern boundary along the Bârzava valley. Southerly, at the confluence of the Caraș and Nera with the Danube there is Haram. The county Keve (Cuvin) had neighbored through a plain zone towards west with Caraș County⁹. The new administrative structure created by the Arpadian kingdom had been elongated to the north-south between the Bârzava valley and the Danube passage and it occupied most of Moravița and Caraș plain.

The eastern boundary was climbing down across the Semenik Mountains and Almăj Depression into the zone of Svinița, where the Danube enters the Iron Gates. The fact that the archdeaconry of Sebeș was located within the Caraș County does not support the inclusion of the depression of Caransebeș and Bistra Valley into the Caraș County¹⁰. The settlements on the superior courses of the Bârzava, Caraș and Nera limited the eastern boundary across the mountainous zone. It had occupied a space naturally limited by the Bârzava in the north, the Danube in the south and the western extremity of the Banat Mountains to the plain zone. The mountainous space from the east and south-east of Banat had entered the control sphere of the Hungarian Kingdom at the beginning of the 4th decade of the 13th century, after the Banat of Severin had been organized. It enabled the access towards the Danube valley and farther away towards the Balkans through Timiș - Cerna passage. The centre of this

⁶ DIR, C, the 11th, 12th, 13th centuries, I, p. 240.

⁷ DIR, C, 13th century, II, p. 270.

⁸ Kristó Gy., *op. cit.*, p. 469-470.

⁹ Györffy, *op. cit.*, p. 308 seq., as concerns the county Keve.

¹⁰ Kristó Gy., *op. cit.*, p. 470 sustains groundlessly the formation of the archdeacon of Sebeș on the territory of Caraș county in a mountainous zone populated by Romanians later on.

county had been initially in the zone where the Caraș and the Nera were flowing into the Danube, at Haram. The fortress of Caraș mentioned in *the Chronicle of the Anonymous Notary (castrum Haram)*, which is identified in the boundary of the locality Banatska Palanka, has remained outside the sphere of investigation of the medieval archaeology. It had a strategic importance because of its location in a ford of the Danube and, in the same time, along an important thoroughfare of communication towards the Balkans Half-Isle. The route that tied up Bulgaria with the Pannonian Plain was a Roman Imperial Route across Niș - Belgrade, and in the north of the Danube across the Caraș Plain going round the western hills to Șemlac and Timișoara. The Byzantine Emperor John the Comnen had traversed the Danube at Haram in 1128 and he had conquered the fortress. The Byzantine armies sent by the emperor Manuel Comnen in 1162 had used the same route through Haram¹¹. At the end of the 13th century, at Haram there had been the residence of the Archdeacon of Caraș, mentioned in an act from 1285¹². The role of the fortress from Haram had been evident within the Danubian expansion policy of Hungary towards the south of the Balkans Half-Isle during the 13th century. The castellans of the fortress mentioned in the second half of the 14th century, had been also vicechieftains of the Caraș County¹³. The fortresses from Ilidia, Vrșac and the spring of the Caraș had been built by the royalty at the end of the 13th century and the beginning of the 14th century, within a program of implantation of new administrative structures into the Romanian environment in the hilly zone of Caraș.

The settlement from Șemlacul Mare (*Mezeusumlow*), located in the plain zone of the Bârzava valley, which had become a borough during the 14th century, had been the center of meeting of the nobles of the Caraș county. The meetings from 1347, 1364 and 1370¹⁴ had taken place there. The nobility forum had decided during the reunion from 1366 that twelve jury assessors should fulfil a decision concerning the judgement of thieves' host¹⁵. The reunion from May 1370, led by the Hungary's Palatine, the duke of Oppeln, had adopted extremely severe measures against the run away serfs¹⁶.

Sometimes it has been spoken about the existence of a county *Sumplio* just around the settlements from *Mezeusumlow* and *Erdsumlow*.

¹¹ Györffy, *op. cit.*, III, p. 487

¹² DIR, C, 11th, 12th, 13th centuries, I, p. 270

¹³ DRH, C, XII, p. 70; DRH, C, XIII, p. 15; Doc. Val., p. 171, 260

¹⁴ Györffy, *op. cit.*, III, p. 493 "*congregacionem generalem ... prope civitatem Mezensumlio*", DRH, C, XIII, p. 770-771; DRH, C, XII, p. 311.

¹⁵ DRH, C, XIII, p. 43

¹⁶ DRH, C, XIII, p. 722.

In the documents of the process for the estate Valea in 1378, one referred to an act from 1277 that had mentioned the settlements Valea and *Kereszeg* (poss. *Voia et Kereszeg in comitatu Sumplio*)¹⁷. In the documents from 1319 and 1326, the chieftain of Caraș has also the title of chieftain of *Sumlow*. These mentions have constituted a documentary support that has sustained the existence of a county *Sumlow* in the vicinity of Caraș County¹⁸. This administrative unity would have occupied the plain zone limited by Șemlacul Mare and Valea and the fortress *Ersumlow* from Vrșac. The two settlements, from Vrșac and Șemlac, were located on the linking route with the Balkans, around which Caras county had been organized. Even from the beginning, it had occupied a geographic space naturally well determined between the basin of the Caraș and of the Bârzava. Certified in the 12th century, the settlement from *Mezeusumlow* on the Bârzava that had been a borough (*civitas*) in the 14th century¹⁹, had played the role of an administrative center of Caraș county even since the 13th century. This fact explains also the denomination of this space both with the name Caraș and with the name *Sumplio*²⁰.

The Danube around the fortress Haram had limited another disappeared county²¹. Documents from the 15th century mention settlements that had belonged to the Romanian district Haram. The idea of the disappeared "county" can be accepted just in this direction.

2. The Banat of Severin

The analysis of the social-political structures from the eastern zone of Banat, at the beginning of the 2nd millenium, can not avoid the matter of the Banat of Severin and its aspects concerning the chronology, the boundaries and the antecedents of the creation of this administrative structure. The massive domination of the Banat Mountains and of the western prolongation of the Meridional Carpathians characterizes the space from the southeast of Banat. The large tectonics depressions of Timiș and Cerna were linking passages between the Danube basin and the plain in the north of Banat. The reconstitution of the ethno-demographic stages and of the social-political structures within this mountainous space of over 3,000

¹⁷ Pesty, *Krassó*, III, p. 4

¹⁸ Pesty, *Krassó*, I, p. 88, he does not accept the idea of this county; Kristó Gy., *op. cit.*, p. 468, he has appreciated that *Sumlov* represents just another name of Caraș county. This change of names took place in the 13th century; St. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, IV, p. 181-119, he has sustained the idea of the existence of a county *Sumlio*.

¹⁹ Györffy, *op. cit.*, p. 493.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 493

²¹ St. Pascu, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 118-119.

km, during the 10th-12th centuries, has more a hypothetical character taking into consideration the lack of information from the written sources.

The archaeological investigations from the depression of Caransebeș and Mehadica have not offered any proves of the Hungarian presence during the 10th-12th centuries. It is very probable that this zone of mountainous passage remained till the 13th century outside the influence and dominance sphere of the Arpadian Hungarian kingdom²².

The reconstitution of the stages of the entrance into the effective control sphere of the Hungarian royalty and of imposing of some administrative specific structures has constituted a long preoccupation of the historiography. Even from the end of the 19th century, Pesty Fr. achieved a historical geography of the Banat of Severin with the support of the written sources. The same historiographer approached the history of the Banat of Severin and of the Romanian districts during the 14th-15th centuries. A series of matters concerning the premises of its appearance and of its historical evolution have been approached in different studies. The history of the Banat of Severin in the 13th century continues to be analyzed with the help of the information from the written sources. The medieval archaeology has brought just a few contributions as concerns this matter²³. The gaps in the sources from the 13th century had determined that some aspects concerning the appearance of the Banat, its extension during this stage lead to different reconstitution in historiography or to be judged from the viewpoint of some different realities from the 14th-15th centuries.

The ban of Severin is mentioned as a witness besides dignitaries of the Hungarian kingdom in the oath from August 1233 from Bereg²⁴. The importance of this testimony had been unanimous accepted and reserves had been expressed concerning only the duration and the evolution of the institution at the middle of the 13th century. The documents mention the existence of some bans of Severin in 1240 and 1243²⁵. It has been accepted that the Banat of Severin had been created somewhere between August 1232 - 1233, its first documentary mention²⁶. It had been organized as a boundary county of the kingdom with military and administrative purposes clearly circumscribed to the Hungarian policy in the western Lower Danube zone. Summary and lacunal information from the written sources have determined a different image of that Arpadian institutional

²² R. Popa, in *SCIVA*, 40, 4, 1989, p. 354.

²³ V. Achim, *RI*, 5, 3-4, 1994, p. 233.

²⁴ Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, I, 1, p. 126; see the critical observations at M. Holban, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

²⁵ M. Holban, *Din cronica relațiilor româno-ungare*, p. 69.

²⁶ Pesty, *Szörény*, I, p. 13; D. Onciul, *Scrieri istorice*, I, 1968, p. 52-53; I. Nistor, *AARMSI*, III, 27, 1945, p. 11; V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

structure seen by M. Holban "rather a settlement of a *clientae* organization depending on the cooperation of the local elements"²⁷. In the same context, it had seen the moment of the transformation of the Banat of Severin in a concrete reality only in 1269, but for two decades. The essential arguments for the proposal of the organizing moment in 1260 had been sustained by the reduced number of documents and by their lack of information for some periods. V. Achim's recent historical investigation has pointed out the groundless character of this argumentation²⁸.

The premises of the foundation of the Banat of Severin have to be seen in the context of the policy promoted by the Hungarian royalty in the zone of the Lower Danube at the end of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th century. The different strategic position of the Lower Danube through its natural links to the Balkans Half-Isle had represented a permanent attraction for the Hungarian kings' conquering tendencies. The disappearance of the Byzantine Empire from the Danubian frontier at the end of the 12th century had determined an amplification of the conquering tendencies towards the south and the southeast of the Hungarian kingdom. However, the king Bela III had conquered the western extremity of the Lower Danube zone from Belgrade-Branicevo-Niš in 1183²⁹.

The Caraş county had been organized in the north Danubian area, west of the mountainous zone, at the end of the 12th century, and the Banat of Severin had been organized in the opposite extremity of the western Lower Danube at the beginning of the 13th century. Thus, it had been located in an important zone of the frontier with the Wallachian -Bulgarian Empire of the Asăneşti. All those had produced a linking route between Hungary and the Balkans Half-Isle across the Banat Plain, Caransebeş, Orşova, Severin and Vidin. That route had been much shorter than the Balkan one³⁰. The Hungarian army interventions since 1211-1213 aimed the control of Vidin during the 13th century. The Lower Danube zone of Banat had got a special strategic importance within the Balkan policy of Hungary since the 13th century. The construction of some fortifications in the 13th century at Pescari, Sviniţa and Turnu Severin illustrate the effective control of the Hungarian royalty over the whole northern Danubian zone.

The delimitation of the boundaries of the Banat of Severin in the 13th century, when the written sources had offered a few references, has

²⁷ M. Holban, *op. cit.*, p. 69

²⁸ V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 236-237.

²⁹ Gy. Moravcsik, *Studia Bizantina*, Budapest, 1967, p. 314-316; S. Papacostea, *Românii în secolul al XIII-lea*, Bucureşti, 1993, p. 37.

³⁰ R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 357; V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 238-240.

aroused divergent opinions in historiography³¹. The northern boundary of the formation had been located somewhere in the mountainous space in the east of Banat. Because of the lacunal documentation, there is no concord concerning its initial tract. Usually one appreciates that the whole mountainous zone from the east of Banat got into the make-up of the Banat of Severin³². The archaeological investigations from Caransebeș or from the passage Timiș-Cerna have not offered, actually, conclusive elements for this. The effective control of the way to the Danube and farther away to Bulgaria across the passage Timiș-Cerna had undoubtedly imposed the integration of the whole zone in the institutional system of the new boundary province founded in the first half of the 13th century.

The situation during the preliminary period of organizing the Banat of Severin has constituted one aspect of this institutional matter. On one side, it has been taking into account the origin of the Banat institution, and, in the same time, it has been tried to identify an anterior formation³³. Hypotheses sustained by different arguments concerning the situation of the eastern territory of Banat and Oltenia during the period anterior to 1233 have been confronted. The Lower Danube space to the Iron Gates zone has been seen as a prolongation towards the east of the Cuman domination from which the Hungarians had taken it³⁴. The same zone has been considered, but, as an extension of the Wallachian -Bulgarian Empire of the Asănești in the north of the Danube³⁵. Șt. Pascu has suggested the presence of a Romanian social-political structure existent in the zone overlapped by the Banat of Severin³⁶. The historical sources bring extremely few testimonies concerning the history of the western Lower Danube zone after the collapse of the Byzantine control at the end of the 12th century and the creation of the Banat of Severin in the 3rd decade of the 13th century. Undoubtedly, there had existed a dispute between the Asănești's tsardom and the Hungarian Kingdom for controlling the zone. Indirect historical testimonies plead for the belonging of the Danubian zone to the Wallachian-Bulgarian Empire at the beginning of the 13th century. It

³¹ Pesty, *Szörény*, I, 1877, p. 7-8; D. Onciul, *op. cit.*, I, p. 624, with boundaries from Hațeg, the east of Banat and a part of Oltenia; II, p. 56-57, the author had referred to the extension of this formation only in the southeastern zone of Banat and Mehedinți; I. Nistor, *op. cit.*, p. 10-11; R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 357; V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

³² R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 357 with the analysis of the opinions on this theme

³³ V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 240-241.

³⁴ I. Ferent, *Cumanii și episcopia lor*, Blaj, 1931, p. 59-60; I. Nistor, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

³⁵ D. Onciul, *op. cit.*, I, p. 625, II, p. 54-55; L. Tăutu, *Buna Vestire*, 1, 1966, p. 1; idem, *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, III, 2, 1964, p. 379.

³⁶ Șt. Pascu, *Istoria României*, II, 1962, p. 113; idem, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, I, p. 146-147; P. Binder, *StRI*, 21, 4, 1968, p. 635.

is difficult to specify to where the control and the influence of the Asănești Empire had spread in the north of the mountainous zone of Banat (Fig. 52). It can not be denied the existence of some Romanian formations in zone as the diploma from 1247 registers them. They had been in the sphere of political and religious confluence of the south Danubian State. The very close religious relations of Banat with the territories in the south of the Danube plead also for a political influence in the same direction. With the historical support the toponym Craina, in the southeastern space of the mountainous Banat, Viorel Achim has brought arguments concerning the existence of a medieval formation under the control of the Wallachian - Bulgarian Empire at the end of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th century.

The region Craina with its twelve settlements occupies, in fact, the zone of the depression Mehadica that controlled the access towards the north of Banat both through the Almăj depression and through the Caransebeș one³⁷. The creation of the Banat of Severin at the beginning of the 13th century had, undoubtedly, an impact on the Romanian political structures that had evolved within some geographical zones naturally bounded. There had been two directions of action in the Romanian society: on one side, the local autonomies had been included into the new state framework of the Hungarian kingdom. On the other side the effort of political subordination had been accompanied by an evident tendency of confessional assimilation of the Romanian orthodox population. The evolution of the local autonomies and of the confessional stages from Banat can be followed during the 14th-15th centuries when the historical sources offer information.

3. Local Autonomies. Medieval Districts from Banat

Historical sources from the beginning of the 14th century reveal own forms of organization and manifestation of the Romanian element in the mountainous space of Banat. The districts from Banat as they are reflected in the documents of the 14th-15th centuries had been manifestations of a local autonomy within the western feudal system of the Hungarian Kingdom³⁸. The problem of the medieval districts has been a preoccupation of the multicultural historiography from Banat for a long time. Its theme is found in the Hungarian positivist writings from the end of the 19th

³⁷ V. Achim, *Național și universal în istoria românilor. Studii oferite prof. dr. Șerban Papacostea cu ocazia împlinirii a 70 de ani*, București, 1998, p. 190-205; I. Bălan, *Numiri de localități*, Caransebeș, 1898, p. 56-59.

³⁸ N. Iorga, *Istoria românilor, Citorii*, III, București, 1993, p. 164-165, he noticed those ancient local autonomies and he considered them the affirmation of a Romanian vitality.

century till now. It has been approached with different working means and conceptions, and from different historical perspectives. Pesty Frigyes called the attention to the Romanian districts in a study published in 1876³⁹. We owe the issue of the historical sources concerning the history of this Romanian medieval institution to the same historian.

The Banat historiography, within the researches of local history, has been preoccupied by the problems of medieval districts during the inter-war period. It has constituted a favorite subject of the historical researches of the Social Institute Banat-Crișana from Timișoara. One can remark Victor Motogna's and Nicolae Tomiciu's studies as concern this matter⁴⁰. The data base has been enriched through Costin Feneșan's and Viorel Achim's recent investigations who have approached with new working tools and a modern method, in the same time, the problems of the Romanian medieval autonomies in Banat⁴¹.

The Almăj district had been constituted on the superior course of the Nera in a geographic zone naturally delimited. The depression Bozovici or Almăj, as it is also known, looks like a typical intra- mountainous depression surrounded by the peaks of the Semenici Mountains and Anina Mountains towards north and north-east while the Almăj Mountains separates it by the Danube passage. The river Nera traverses as a longitudinal axis the depression space along 30 km in length. The natural ways of communication, towards the south-west with the depression Oravița and towards the north-east, above Craina of Banat, with the Danube Valley, offered the access in the depression Almăj. The medieval route, mentioned in the act from 1367, was crossing the Almăj transversally, following an old Roman tract⁴². It had traversed the mining zone Sasca where the estate *Zagarian* had been identified, going round the Nera Gorges, climbing down the depression Almăj at Șopotul Nouthrough the boundary of the settlements *Kuesd* and *Almaș*. There had been also linking routes over the Almăj Mounts with the Depression Liubcova from the Danube valley.

The district Almăj had been registered in the written sources just during the 15th century. The chancellery acts mention the belonging of some estates and villages of the district Almăj or the participation of some jurymen to the common reunions of the districts of Banat. The letter dated

³⁹ Pesty Fr., *A Szörény vármegyei hajdani oláh kerületek*, Budapest, 1876, p. 3-49.

⁴⁰ V. Motogna, *Banatul de altădată*, p. 3-18, 565-570; N. Tomiciu, *RISBC*, 10, 1942, p. 595seq.; G. Cotoșman, *RISBC*, 13, 1944, p. 367-389.

⁴¹ C. Feneșan, *Banatica*, 5, 1979, p. 266-272; V. Achim, *Banatica*, 12, 2, 1993, p. 47-57; *idem*, *AnB*, 2, 1993, p. 245-258

⁴² DRH, C, XIII, p. 359 "a wide way that traverses the Nera".

August 21, 1430, in which *Nicolaus of Radawitz*, the commander of the Teutons complained against the nobles from Almăj to the king, can be considered the first testimony about the organization of the district Almăj⁴³. Ioan of Săliște (*Johannes de Sylisthe*), Blasiu of Gârliște (*Blasiu de Gerlestha*) and Ioan, Dragomir's son (*Johannes filius Dragamer*)⁴⁴ had represented the district Almăj at the common reunion of the seven districts of Banat in 1452. The act on the 22nd of January 1452 had mentioned the district with the word "*pertinencis Halmas*"⁴⁵. Iacob Gârlișteanu had owned the estates Rudăria, Gârliște, Prilipeț, Arnegu, Marginea, Săliște and Prodaria located in the south of the depression. The royal letter from 1484 confirms this ownership of the estates and villages from the district Almăj (*omnia in districtu de Halmas*)⁴⁶. Two documents from 1550 and 1555 referring to older ownerships had mentioned the settlements Prigor, Lăpușnic, Bozovici and more estates round Bozovici, located within the same district⁴⁷. The written documents from the 14th-15th centuries have offered little information about the settlements in the boundaries of the district, and the medieval archaeology has not done significant progress as concerns this matter. The lacunal aspect of the documentation does not offer a clear image about the evolution of the habitat during the 14th-15th centuries in the district Almăj. The fourteen settlements known from the written and archaeological sources are located along the Nera, from the zone Șopotu Nou to Prigor⁴⁸. The boundaries of the district had been included in the geographic outline of the depression. There are not comparison elements in the medieval sources concerning the extension and the occupation of the mountainous space around the depression. Though it has been suggested the existence of a royal fortress at Dalboșeț, on the Hill Grădiște⁴⁹, the archaeological investigation did not confirm its existence.

Excepting the act from 1452 that had mentioned the three jurymen from Almăj who had participated to the reunion of the districts, the written sources do not bring any information concerning the reunions from the district. The knezes and nobles from the district Almăj who had been in

⁴³ Pesty, *Szörény*, III, p. 24.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 62-63.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

⁴⁶ Pesty, *Oláh kerületek*, p. 82, 84; C. Feneșan, DMB, p. 46-47.

⁴⁷ Pesty, *Szörény*, III, p. 261-262; 271-275.

⁴⁸ Pesty Fr., *Oláh kerületek*, p. 12-13; St. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, IV, 1989, p. 50.

⁴⁹ Th. Trăpcea, *St/B*, I, 1970, p. 55. St. Pascu, *op. cit.*, p. 50 accepts the hypothesis about the existence of the citadel Almăj at Dalboșeț; Engel, *op. cit.*, p. 324 supposes a localisation of the citadel Almăj in the zone Șopotu Vechi.

conflict with Emeric Himfy had refused Nicolae Radewitz's – the ban of Severin - judgement, in 1430. This Romanian solidarity illustrates an action of a Romanian institution within the local autonomy⁵⁰. During the same period, in the acts of the Teutons' order 293 principalities had been reviewed in the district Almăj. Within the Romanian feudality in this zone, the family Gârlișteanu that had had estates in the Rudărie valley had been detached among the other ones. However, we know little about the Gârlișteni nobles during the 15th century, about their role within the Romanian nobility in Banat. Besides them, one can remark the existence of some Romanian nobility families at Moceriș, Bănia and Bozovici.

The district from the Bârzava's springs had occupied a part of the upper course of the Bârzava. The Semenik Mts. that lies a surface of 14 km² within the hydrographic basin dominates the zone. The relief of the zone is structured in steps that climb down from the heights of the mountainous plateaus into the hilly zone located in the west of Reșița. From its source to the contact zone with the Dognecea Mts. Bârzava traverses about 50 km in length almost all types of relief. The river has a deep valley that gets narrow downstream Reșița. The valley gets large towards Moniom and it has a meadow measuring 400 by 600 m in width.

The existence of the district in this segment of the mountainous space of Banat had been documentary registered in 1370 when *Peter's village*⁵¹ had been certified within it. The village Doman, mentioned in the same context, had certainly belonged to the district from the Bârzava's springs. The chancellery acts from the 15th century reflect much better the situation of the habitat. The information about the settlements allows a reconstitution of the district's area during that period. The documents from the beginning of the 15th century, the act from 1411 referring to the estate Râul Alb reveal that the knezes from Țerova had owned the superior valley of the Bârzava⁵². Medieval archaeology has proved the existence of the feudal residence of the Țerova seven since the first half of the 14th century. Implicitly, one can talk about the existence of the exerted ownership even since that period. Besides the six villages of the knezes from Țerova, the written sources from the 15th century mention the settlements from Călnic, *Mailat*, *Maicho*, Târnova, Bratova, Vasiova and Baciú that means thirteen villages⁵³.

The district from the Bârzava's springs had occupied a zone limited by the boundary of the nowadays settlements of Văliug, Târnova, Bratova,

⁵⁰ Pesty, Szörény, III, p. 24; I.A. Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁵¹ DRH, C, XIII, p. 770 "*villa Petri filii Balk in pertinenciis Borzafel*".

⁵² D. Țeicu, *SCIVA*, 40, 1, 1989, p. 59 seq.

⁵³ Pesty Fr., *Oláh kerületek*, p. 49, he considers just nine settlements; Turchány T., *op. cit.*, I, p. 246, he appreciated just eight settlements of the district.

Țerova, Călnic, Monion and Doman. It had measured about 300 km² along the course of the Bârzava. The eastern limit of the district had been on the Semenik plateaus, in the zone Văliug, while the western boundary can be identified in the west of Monion. The depression Ezeriș had been in the northwest of the district Bârzava. The delimitation of the southern boundary, which had been separated by the district Caraș, among the low summits of Anina Mounts, can be approximated taking into account the lacunary information⁵⁴. The appreciation concerning the extension of the western boundaries into the plain zone of the Bârzava valley do not have a documentary basis and they have been taken as such in historiography, without any verification of the sources⁵⁵.

The documents of the 14th-15th centuries point out a homogenous Romanian habitat, and, from the point of view of the social states, they reveal knezial ownership. Patrimonial disputes from 1418 and 1433 between Filip and Petru, Iuga's sons, with Mailat Dragomer, their brother and other sixteen knezes for the knezdons of the estates Mailoth Maicho had been judged in front of the district's reunion. The knezes from Țerova had constituted a valley knezdom on the superior course of the Bârzava. It had contained six villages at the middle of the 15th century. The act of confirmation of the ownership of the village Vale and of the two Țerova on the 25th of May 1448 had specified that they had owned those estates on the basis of the knezial law. The village Baciș, located on a tributary of the Bârzava River and mentioned in 1433 had been also a knezial ownership. The relationship of the Romanian world from the district with the royal authority had been established through the castellan of the Bârzava royal fortress. Jacob of Abel, the castellan in 1418, had led the judgement forum of the knezes from the districts Bârzava and Caraș. The same knezial judgement instance had judged again the process for the estate Mailat Maicho in 1433 that had been led by the castellan Petru of Kerestez⁵⁶. The knezial reunions constituted in judgement forums had decided on some local causes to which the knezes from that zone had participated. They had functioned in the virtue of an archaic tradition that the zone at the Semenik's foot had preserved for a long time⁵⁷. The district Bârzava had been represented at the united meeting of the districts from Banat in 1452 by the castellan of the fortress Egidiu and by Filip Bachi (probably

⁵⁴ C. Feneșan, *op. cit.*, p. 295 seq.; the document on the 25th of May 1448 had specified that the knezes Țerova's domain had been neighboured with the citadel Caraș.

⁵⁵ R. Vuia, *AnB*, II, 3, 1929, p. 28-29; M. Bizerea, C. Rudeanu, *op. cit.*, p. 10; St. Pascu, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 49.

⁵⁶ Pesly, *Krassó*, III, p. 344

⁵⁷ V. Achim, *RI*, 3, 9-10, 1992, p. 919.

Baciu)⁵⁸. In the social life of the district, during two centuries (the 14th-15th centuries), the knezial family from Țerova⁵⁹ had played a very important role. The documents do not allow a closer appreciation about the role played in the social life of the district by the knezes from Baciu, mentioned besides the Țerova's knezes.

The district from the Caraș's springs had been organized on the superior course of the Caraș river, in a zone dominated by Dognecea Mounts in the north, and by Anina Mounts in the south and east. Lacunal information from the chancellery acts of the second half of the 14th century has offered reference points for the delimitation of the district's boundaries. The bounding act of the estate Secaș from 1358 had mentioned a royal estate named **Baia Secășului** and the lands of the royal fortress Caraș on the northern boundary⁶⁰. A later act on the 25th of May 1448 has pointed out that the knezes from Țerova's estates, in the Bârzava valley, had a boundary with the fortress Caraș (*metis et antiquis limitibus a castro Crasofeu*)⁶¹. The northern edge of the district can be identified in the north of Cârnecea, Calina and of the depression Lupac. It had been neighbor in that metalliferous zone of the Dognecea Mts. with the district Cuiești. In addition, in the north, somewhere around the settlement Doman, it had been neighbor with the district Bârzava. One can acknowledge the south-eastern and eastern extremity where the district had neighbored the district Ilidia approximately taking into account the lacunal character of the historical sources.

The boundary act of the estate Valea on the 29th of March 1378 mentioned the village *Guden* in its vicinity. The village had belonged to the fortress Caraș. The knezdom Guden had been located in the proximity of the confluence of the brook Zecen with the Caraș (*ubi Zecenpataka in earundem fluvium Crassou cadere*)⁶². Later testimonies from 1535 had registered within the district the settlements from Gârliște, Jitin, Agadici, Ciudanovița and Budovița⁶³. The line of the settlements from Gârliște, Ciudanovița, Măidan to Agadici has marked the south-eastern and eastern boundary of the district along the peaks of Anina Mounts. The Caraș's course, in a zone between the Valley Budovița to Vărădia and Vrani, where there had been the estate Valea, had been separating the district Caraș towards the west by the possessions of the fortress *Ersumlov* from Vrșac⁶⁴.

⁵⁸ Pesty, *Szörény*, III, p. 64.

⁵⁹ C. Feneșan, *op. cit.*, p. 291; D. Țeicu, *SCIVA*, 40, 1, 1989, p. 68-69.

⁶⁰ DRH, C, XI, p. 285.

⁶¹ C. Feneșan, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

⁶² Posty, *Krassó*, III, p. 135.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, IV, p. 19-20; C. Feneșan, DMB, p. 56.

⁶⁴ St. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, IV, p. 49, has established the boundaries of the district just in the Danube valley.

The documentary information mentions seven settlements within the district during the 14th century. The table of the habitat in the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century contains 17 settlements, including the settlements known from the anterior period⁶⁵.

The systematization of the data from the sources of the 14th-15th centuries referring to the district can be appreciated that it had occupied a space limited by the boundaries of the villages Carașova, Gârliște, Goruia, Ciudanovița, Jitin, Agadici, Giurgiova, Calina, Secășeni, Cârnecea and Ticvaniul Mare. The Caraș valley, with its course directed from the north-east towards southwest forms an access passage in this zone dominated by hills and two mountainous massifs. It traverses, between Ticvaniul Mare and Carașova, a long route. The district Caraș occupied a surface of 300 km² with mountainous and hilly space. The chancellery acts from the 14th century certify the settlements Carașova Mare, Carașova Mică and Secășin 1358 and the village *Guden* in 1378. During the 15th century the villages Goruia, Luca, Petrovăț and *Marovyth*, are registered and Agadici, known even from the 14th century, is documented as a fair. The medieval archaeology, except for the investigations in the church and the necropolis from Cârnecea, had brought no important elements for the knowledge of the habitat of the district Caraș. Only four settlements from those known from the Latin sources of the 14th-15th centuries are not found in the Turkish sources from the middle of the 16th century that indicates a very low percentage of abandoning. Within the habitat's dynamics when the existence of some "new" settlements has been remarked as in the case of Prolas that had 105 inhabitants⁶⁶.

The district's relations with the central authority were regulated by the castellan from the fortress Carașova. Its castellans had been mentioned in documents since 1323. A 1418 document, mentioning the knezes Dionisie of Luca and Dominic from Goruia as participants to the judgement for the estates Mailat Maicho from the neighboring district Bârzava, is very relevant for this matter as well as for the autonomy degree of the district and the functioning of the institutional devices. In 1433, Ioan called Farcaș, Dionisie from Goruia, Nicolae of Luca and Mihail the Little of *Armista*⁶⁷ had participated to a knezial meeting for the same cause. The Romanian nobles and knezes from the district from the Caraș's springs had taken part to the united meeting of the seven districts that had taken

⁶⁵ Pesty, *Oláh kerületek*, p. 49, mentions sixteen settlements, some of them belonging to the citadel of Vârșet. St. Pascu, *op. cit.*, p. 49, is dealing with the same number of settlements.

⁶⁶ T. Halasi-Kun, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

⁶⁷ Pesty, *Krassó*, III, p. 345; V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

place at Caransebeș in 1452⁶⁸. George, Maro's son from Carașova, and Luca from *Luki "de pertinenciis Crassofew"* had testified, besides the representatives of the other districts, confirming Mihail of Cema's and Nicolae of Bizere⁶⁹'s ownership of some fortresses on the Danube. The diploma from the 29th of August 1457 had mentioned the district Caraș among the eight districts to which the royalty had guaranteed certain social privileges that had been local autonomies. The social states reflected in the chancellery acts from the 14th-15th centuries mention some knezial ownership within the district. The estates on the Secăuș valley of the knezes Farcaș and Grigore, Zokul's sons, had been knezial ownership being Vale knezdom-shaped. The invasion of that estate by Ioan Pecenegul in 1358 had represented a violent dispossession of the Romanian feudals and the transformation of the knezdoms in nobility possessions. This action, achieved within a district, has proved that in 1358 and to the end of the 14th century, the Romanian feudality had not got the interdiction of some royal donations for the foreign nobles within the districts, among the other privileges. The case of the Romanian nobles from Valea's dispossession from the district Ilidia or of the village Biniș, in the district Cuiești, confirms that this privilege of the Romanians from districts had been imposed to the royalty at the beginning of the 15th century. The estate Secăș, located within the district, had remained the nobles Himfy's possession.

Written documents from the 15th century have brought a little light as concerns the Romanian knezes and nobles from the district. They are mentioned as witnesses and neighbors in the property's processes in the Bârzava valley from 1418 and 1433 or among the participants to common reunions of the districts.

The district Comiat had grafted itself in the close zone of the superior basin of the Pogănișthe Dognecea Mts. and Armeniș Mts. limit the Pogăniș valley towards the south to Bârbosu and Valea where it gets out of the plain. The prolonged summits of the hills Sacoș - Zăgujeni are sloping down from the north into the Pogăniș valley so that this has the aspect of a close zone. In this natural framework, a Romanian institution had evolved during the 14th century and it had contained fifteen Romanian villages⁷⁰. The boundary act of the domain Remetea – Ersig on the 13th of March 1369 had mentioned the boundary signs that had separated the district Comiat in the southwest and west (*provincia Comyath*). The valley of the brooks Eruşag and Areniș, tributaries of the Pogăniș from the boundary of the villages Duleu and Valeapai had separated the nobles Himfy's domain by the district Comiat: "there where the brook Erusag flows into

⁶⁸ Pesty, Szörény, III, p. 62.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

⁷⁰ V. Achim, *AnB*, 2, 1993, p. 254-258.

the river Pogăniș there are two new boundary hillocks and the eastern one marks the county Comiat, and the western one marks the estate Ersig”⁷¹. A southern tributary of the Pogăniș, the brook Areniș had constituted the southwestern boundary of Comiat with the estate Ersig (“there where the brook Aurit flows into that river Pogăniș ... there had been two new boundary hillocks, and the eastern one separates the estate Cumyath and the western one the estate Ersig”⁷². The bounding act from 1369 mentions that the district Lugoj is located on the northern boundary with Comiat. In the south and southeast, along the summits of Dognecea Mounts there had been the districts Cuiești and Bârzava. The chancellery documents do not offer any information about the situation of the depression Ezeriș and its eventual affiliation to one of the neighboring districts. The delimitation of the eastern boundary, along the summits of the Hills Sacoș-Zăguzeni, that had separated Comiat by the district Sebeș is marked out with the information from the chancellery acts at the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the next century. The disappeared village Gamza, mentioned in the donation act from 1352 for the knezes of Mâtnic, is located in the boundary of the actual village Zorlencior. Documents from the beginning of the 15th century prove that the village Gamza had belonged to the district Comiat. A group of six villages located towards the river’s springs (Delinești, Ohabița, Apadia, Lățcani, *Striges* and *Kisfalu*) had belonged to the nobles Bizere’s possessions in this zone at the beginning of the 15th century⁷³. The reconstitution of the boundaries of the district Comiat reveals that it had occupied a surface of 200 km² of the basin of the river Pogăniș⁷⁴. The institution as such had been documentary registered, as we have already seen, in 1369 as *provincia* or *possessio Cumyath*. Its villages have been mentioned in documents since 1420. This sector of the Pogăniș valley had not been investigated even partially. As such the medieval archaeology brought no elements concerning the age of the villages and the structure of the medieval habitat. A certain instability of the habitat can be assumed, given the fact that eleven out of the fifteen settlements of the district had been laid waste⁷⁵, i.e. an abandonment coefficient of 73%. We have to take into account that the Ottoman sources from the middle of the 16th century had mention the settlements Duleu, Dezești, Fârlug for the western zone of the district. Some of them, such as Fârlug had just 180 inhabitants that denote a certain concentration of the habitat

⁷¹ DRH, C, XIII, p. 583

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 583.

⁷³ C. Feneșan, *Sargeția*, 16/17, p. 275.

⁷⁴ V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 247

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 247.

under the impact of the Ottoman conquests in 1550⁷⁶. Part of the deserted villages can be found into these settlements that means, undoubtedly, a little abandonment coefficient.

It is difficult to establish the district's relations with the central power in absence of some testimonies referring to the existence of a royal fortress or of a castellan in the zone. The district meetings, the patrimonial and judicial decisions approved represent an expression of the district's autonomy identical with that one of the other Romanian institutions within the mountainous space of Banat. The nobles and the knezes from the district had taken part to a meeting of the four districts led by the ban of Severin in 1391 (*nobiles et kenesios districtum et provinciarum quator scilicet de Sebeș, de Lugas ac de Karan et Komyathi*). As a consequence of the common reunion of the nobles and knezes from the districts Lugoj, Sebeș and Comiat that had taken place in 1420, Bogdan, Nicolae's son, Măgoia's son, had got a confirmation diploma of his estates' knezdoms⁷⁷. The nobles and the knezes mentioned in the act on the 25th of July 1420 had sworn that Bogdan and his brothers had lost their acts in the fights against the Turks⁷⁸. They had sworn "on their honour's word in front of the God". The district Comiat had been represented by Ladislau Mozka and Ioan the Deacon from Mihălinți at the reunion of the seven districts that had taken part in 1452. The pledge act from 1503, as well as the civil process concerning a heritage from 1499 had been considered on the basis of the old Romanian law (*iuxta ritum valachie*). The king Sigismund of Luxembourg had pledged the borough and the district Comiat to lancu of Hunedoara between 1435 and 1437⁷⁹. The diploma from 1457, issued on the king's order, had cancelled the pledge act because of the payment of the district inhabitants' debt. It had stipulated the obtaining back the rights of the other seven districts, too⁸⁰. It has been already pointed out the importance of the district inhabitants' action that certified an organizational structure executed by a Romanian medieval institution able to maintain the cohesion of the Romanian community and to defense its autonomy⁸¹. This fact explains the Romanian ethnic compact block that is met in the habitat's structure within the mountainous space of Banat.

From the point of view of the social structures, the documents had revealed knezial ownership even from the beginning of the 15th century. The confirmation diploma of the ownership of the "knezdoms of the es-

⁷⁶ T. Halasi-Kun, *AO*, X, 1985, p. 119-120; Engö, *TMTT*, p. 50, 53.

⁷⁷ DRH, D, I, p. 217.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

⁷⁹ Pestly, *Krassó*, III, p. 351-352, 360

⁸⁰ Idem, *Oláh királyság*, p. 75-76

⁸¹ V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

tates Strâmtura, Răchita and Măgoaia from 1420 had mentioned that Bogdan, Nicolae's son, had to possess and own them as the other Romanians' knezdoms"⁸². The documents from the first half of the 15th century mention that the representatives of the Romanian feudality of the district who had undoubtedly played an important role as concern its ruling. Vasa from Gamza had been, in 1420, a participant to a reunion of the districts. In 1457, he had been sent by the people of the district to the king to cancel the pledge. Nicolae Tihomir from Gamza is known from an act from 1458. Toma from Remetea, Mihail from Călugăreni and Stanislau from Rogoz had been mentioned in the same time. Ioan the Deacon from Mlhălinți deserves a special attention. He had represented the district to the reunion from 1452 and he had been mentioned by the occasion of some introductions into ownership in 1458. During 1458-1464, Ioan the Deacon from Mihălinți had been in a property process in the Bârzava valley, besides the knezes from Țerova to whose family he had belonged⁸³.

The district Cuiești was located at the confluence of the Dognecea Mounts with the Timiș Plain, which penetrates as a gulf along the Bârzava valley towards the mountainous zone. The institution had been mentioned in the donation act of the estate Biniș on the 4th of July 1349 (*locum seu situm ville in districtu Kuesd*)⁸⁴, but it had undoubtedly functioned before. Along the western edge of Dognecea Mounts that had been also its boundary, it had neighbored to a vast feudal domain of the Himfys. The villages Ramna and Goloane, in the Bârzava valley, had been at the boundary with the fortress Cuiești. The northern edge had been located in the mountainous zone, around the fortress Areniș, where it had been neighbor with the district Comiat in the Pogăniș valley and, on a certain segment, with the same domain of the nobles Himfy⁸⁵. The boundary act of the estate Binis, located in the southwest of the district, had mentioned the zone of the mining exploitations from Ocna de Fier (on the way from Banya), in 1351⁸⁶. The delimitation of the southern boundary can be appreciated in the mountainous zone between Doclin and Dognecea. The district Bârzava met the district Cuiești in the zone of the Bârzava valley, somewhere in the west of Moniom. The lacunal information from the chancellery acts make difficult a more shaded marking out of the boundaries of the district Cuiești. Nevertheless, it had been organized in the metalliferous area of the Dognecea Mounts. The Bârzava course traversed it transversally from the east to the west. The donation act on the 14th of February 1395 had referred to the fortress Cuiești together with the surrounding metalliferous

⁸² DRH, D, I, p. 217

⁸³ C. Feneșan, *StCIEC*, II, p. 296 seq.

⁸⁴ V. Achim, *Banatica*, 12, 2, 1993, p. 55

⁸⁵ DRH, C, XIII, p. 582.

⁸⁶ V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

mountains (*castrum Kwesd vocatum ... simulcum villis et montaniferi ad ipsum castrum spectantibus*)⁸⁷.

The delimitation of the districts in southern Banat has been often done contradictory even with few documentary testimonies. Pesty Fr. tried to identify it in the region between Caraș and Iliđa so that the fortress Cuiești had been located somewhere between Calina and Caraș⁸⁸. This proposal can be found at F. Milleker's⁸⁹ and D. Csanki's⁹⁰ older studies of historical geography, but also in more recent works at M. Bizerea and St. Pascu⁹¹.

The center of the district is in the Bârzava valley, in the actual boundary of the town Bocșa where the fortress Cuiești had been built. The boundary act of the estate Biniș from 1351 had mentioned the brook Bocșa Valley that had separated the zone of the fortress Cuiești by the estate Biniș. The castellans and the clerks of the royal fortress Cuiești are mentioned in the second half of the 14th century in a permanent conflict with the Himfy's neighboring domain. The knezes of the fortress had been involved besides the castellans in patrimonial disputes. The case of the knez Neacșu, from 1376, is extremely clear as concerns the domain knezes' implication besides the castellans into the patrimonial disputes⁹².

The relationship of the Romanian world of the district with the fortress castellans, the functioning of the knezial meetings and the practicing of their prerogatives within the local autonomies are only a little known because of the lack of historical sources. The registration of "*Radul Voyvoda comes de Kuesd*" in a document from the 21st of September 1370 certifies the existence of the voivodal function within the district Cuiești. A recent analysis of the voivodes' matter within the districts from Banat has pointed out the important roles that they had had in organizing the Romanian knezial and nobility meetings in the districts.

The royalty's rude interference, illustrated through the dispossession of the village Biniș, in 1349, and the mention of the district Cuiești in 1389, among the family Himfy's ownership, has illustrated the process of restriction of the autonomy and the elimination of a Romanian institution.

The written documents at the middle of the 14th century concerning the settlements from the district Cuiești mention knezial ownership. Biniș and the knez Ilie's village from vicinity had been knezial villages. The royal donations within the district Cuiești, such as the case of the village Biniș,

⁸⁷ Ortway Tm, p. 250-251.

⁸⁸ Pesty, *Krassó*, II, 1, p. 299

⁸⁹ B. Milleker, DKF, p. 50.

⁹⁰ Csanki, MH, II, p. 96.

⁹¹ M. Bizerea, C. Rudeanu, *StB*, I, 1969, p. 10; St. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, IV, p. 61.

⁹² V. Achim, *SMIM*, 12, 1994, p. 99-104; idem, *Banatica*, 12, 1993, p. 49 seq.

had had profound social and political consequences that had led to the elimination of a Romanian institutional structure.

The district Caran had occupied a reduced sector of the Timiș valley towards the plain, between Cărvan (today C. Daicoviciu) and Jdioara. Thus, it had been located between the district Lugoj in the northwest and the district Sebeș in the south. The document on the 1st of June 1397 had mentioned the estate Pogăniș, that had existed in the district Caran⁹³, that has constituted the first registration of its existence. The borough Caran had been located in the Timiș meadow, within the commune C. Daicoviciu (ex-Cărvan), and not on the bank of the Sebeș as the historiography has mentioned sometimes⁹⁴. The boundaries of the district had been located on the southern limit of the Zăgujeni Hills, where it had been neighbor with the estates of the nobles of Mâtnic and the western limit of the Mounts Poiana Ruscă, where it had been neighbor with the district Sebeș. R. Popa has proposed to include the royal fortress from Jdioara in the district's boundaries. Its castellans had had the role of representatives of the central power in the district⁹⁵. The patrimonial conflicts of the "guests" in Caran with the nobles of Mâtnic had constituted a topic of the reunion of the nobles and knezes from the districts Lugoj, Sebeș, Caran and Comiat in 1391⁹⁶. The same judicial forum of the nobles and knezes from the districts Lugoj, Sebeș, Caran and Comiat had met at Caran, in May 1419, to settle the conflict between the nobles of Mâtnic and the inhabitants of Caran⁹⁷. The integration of the district Caran into the district Sebeș had taken place gradually, during the 15th century, when the documents mention just the free town Caran.

The district Sebeș had grouped the villages from the depression of Caransebeș during the 14th-15th centuries. The zone has a hilly appearance and the Mounts Țarcu in the east and the Mounts Semenici in the west bounded it. The river Timiș, getting off Teregova, traverses towards the north the intra- mountainous space. In the proximity of Caransebeș, the river Sebeș, sloping down from the Muntele Mic unifies its waters with the Timiș waters. Near Jupa, there is confluence of the Sebeș with the Bistra.

The existence of the district is confirmed in 1350 by the act of privileges in favor of the chieftain Lupcin of the family Mâtnic⁹⁸. Two years later, on the 8th of November 1352, the knezes of Mâtnic had got the

⁹³ Pestly, *Szörény*, III, p. 15

⁹⁴ I. Măroiu, *AnB*, 4, 1, 1931, p. 33 seq.; Al. Horvath, *SICIEC*, II, 1977, p. 403-408, about the territorial delimitation of the districts Caran and Sebeș, *Doc. Val.*, p. 124, he had considered that the two boroughs had been located on the banks of the Sebeș; St. Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, IV, p. 43 the same opinion.

⁹⁵ R. Popa, *SCIVA*, 40, 4, 1989, p. 360 and note 34.

⁹⁶ Pestly, *Oláh körületek*, p. 52-53.

⁹⁷ Idem, *Krassó*, III, p. 289 seq.

⁹⁸ St. Olteanu, *StFI*, 17, 5, 1964, p. 1411 seq.

confirmation of their ownership over the Mâtnic valley from the district Sebeș (*provincia Sebeș*)⁹⁹. The villages owned by the family Mâtnic located between the Zăgujeni Hills and the river Timiș, from Ohaba, Mâtnic, Prisaca, Jupa, had marked a part of the northern boundary of the district Sebeș. The northern limit had followed the Bistra valley along the summits of the Mounts Poiana Ruscă, between Ciuta and Băuțar. The village Ciuta, located at the entrance of the passage Bistra, had been mentioned in the bounding act from 8th of June 1411, within the boundaries of the district Sebeș (*possessio ipsorum Chwta vocato in districtu de Sebeș*)¹⁰⁰. At the beginning of the 15th century, the villages and the estates of the nobles Bizere from the district Sebeș had occupied a sector of 12 km in length along the Bistra valley to the summits of the Mounts Poiana Ruscă¹⁰¹. Along the Timiș valley, in the north of Prisaca and Peștere, the district Caran had limited there the district Sebeș. On the left bank of the Timiș, among the hills of Zăgujeni, the district Comiat had been neighbor with the district Sebeș in the north¹⁰².

The southern boundary was somewhere in the gorges of the Timiș Valley, at Armeniș. The villages owned by the Romanian nobles from Armeniș, both towards Semenici and the Mounts Țarcu, during the 15th century, had limited the southern boundary where the district Sebeș had been neighbor to the district Mehadia. The territory between the Timiș valley and the eastern slopes of Semenici with the settlements from Armeniș, Sadova, Slatina, Goleș, Bucușnița and Petroșnița, had been mentioned in 1468 as belonging to the nobles from Armeniș and Măcicaș¹⁰³. They had also owned a part of the western zone of the Timiș valley at Armeniș, Sat Bătrân and Vălișoara. In all, the boundaries of the district Sebeș, along the passage of the Timiș, had covered a surface measuring 1,800 km². The chancellery documents from the end of the 15th century referring to the district had registered the existence of forty settlements¹⁰⁴. The habitat description from the district's space, in the 14th century, is far from a satisfactory image when the written sources mention just a few villages of the family Mâtnic. The archaeological investigations as concerns this matter are just at the beginning. Excepting the investigations from Obreja, where the disappeared settlement Bizere and a cult monument had been located, any verification to identify the medieval settlements lacks.

⁹⁹ DRH, C, X, p. 161.

¹⁰⁰ Pesty, Krassó, III, p. 269.

¹⁰¹ Idem, Szörény, III, p. 41 and 54.

¹⁰² V. Achim, AnB, 2, 1993, p. 246.

¹⁰³ Pesty, Szörény, III, p. 82.

¹⁰⁴ Idem, Oláh kerületok, p. 43-46; St. Pascu, *op. cit.*, p. 44 he mentioned 83 settlements at the end of the 15th century. M. Bizere, C. Rudeanu, *op. cit.*, p. 11-12 with the same unverifiable figures.

The centre of the district had been at Caransebeș, a settlement located at the confluence of the Timiș with the Sebeș. The initial name of the district and of the town met in the acts from the 14th-15th centuries had been Sebeș. Only in a document issued on the 29th of April 1290 at Caransebeș by the king Ladislau IV¹⁰⁵, because the complete name of the town "Caransebeș" is met in the chancellery acts since 1370¹⁰⁶. I. Miloia, sustained by the written documents and the archaeological investigations, had proved, six decades ago, the existence of the borough Caran at about 15-km north by Sebeș in the boundary of the locality Căvăran, today C. Daicoviciu¹⁰⁷. The medieval topography of Caransebeș has preoccupied in a little measure the archaeological investigation. The identification of the medieval fortress of the 13th-14th centuries has not interested the medieval archaeology. The initial nucleus has been reconstituted with the documentary support of the town plans from the 18th century¹⁰⁸. The castellans of the royal fortress from Sebeș had been certified since 1325¹⁰⁹. The surface investigations and the test trenches have identified dwelling traces from the 12th-13th centuries in the zone Balta Sărată in the southwest of Caransebeș. On the bank of the Sebeș, graves from a necropolis belonging to the same period have been investigated, which have called the archaeologists' attention to this zone.

The act from 1350, which constitutes the first documentary attestation of the district Sebeș, mentions the institution with the word *districtus*. Subsequently, in 1352, the district is registered as "the province Sebeș" so that, in 1366, it is mentioned in both ways: "*in toto provincia seu toto districtu Sebeș*"¹¹⁰. The two estates Mătnic, confirmed through the donation act from 22nd of September 1370 to Sturza's sons, had been located in the district Caransebeș¹¹¹. Even if it had been registered in the Caransebeș area, the documents of the 15th century prove the evolution still separated of the districts Caran and Sebeș. The 1391 conflict between Bogdan of Mătnic and "the guests" from Caran had got in front of the reunion of the nobles and knezes from the four neighboring districts: Sebeș, Lugoj, Caran and Comiat (*nobiles et kenesios districtum et provinciarum quator scilicet de Sebeș, de Lugas, ac Caran et Comyathi*)¹¹².

From the point of view of the ethnic aspect, the district Sebeș had been a compact Romanian zone. The information from the documents of

¹⁰⁵ DIR, C, veac XIII, 2, p. 316.

¹⁰⁶ DRH, C, XIII, p. 839 "*in districtu Karansebus*".

¹⁰⁷ I. Miloia, *op. cit.*, p. 33 seq.

¹⁰⁸ G. Anghel, *op. cit.*, p. 119; R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

¹⁰⁹ DIR, C, veac XIV, 2, p. 149. Posa de Zer had been castellan at Ildia and Sebeș.

¹¹⁰ DRH, C, XIII, p. 2.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 839.

¹¹² Pesty, *Oláh kerületek*, p. 52-53.

the 14th-15th centuries have pointed out aspects of the Romanian social realities of the district, as well as the relationship of this Romanian medieval institution with the central power. The public meetings of the district Caransebeș, recently discussed in historiography, illustrate the Romanian knezes and nobles' prerogatives and the Romanians' local autonomy imposed by the Angevine royalty¹¹³. The act of the first known meeting, issued by Sebeș on the 12th of March 1439, had a conclusive character in favor of Lado of Bizere¹¹⁴. The nobles' meeting in April 1440 had taken place to certify the nobles Ioan, Dumitru and Șorban of Măcicaș's ownership of the estate Ciuta and Zăzești¹¹⁵. The judgement forum of the district, met in March 1447, had confirmed the ownership of some estates to the noblemen Șorban, Dumitru and Ladislau of Măcicaș. Their property acts had been destroyed during a Turkish foray. For the same cause of the nobles from Măcicaș, the nobles and knezes' meeting "*universitas nobilium et keneshorum de districtu KaranSebeș*" had issued a certifying act on the 2nd of July 1456¹¹⁶. The meeting of the nobles of the district in August 1448 had judged a civil cause referring to the ownership of some mountainous zones (*montibus alpinis Selye*)¹¹⁷. In February 1454, the meeting of the nobles of the district had discussed a fiscal cause that had reflected part of the taxes that the knezes from the mountainous space of Banat had been obliged to pay at the middle of the 15th century. The nobles Iacob, Dumitru and Ladislau of Măcicaș had been judged because they had refused to pay the annual taxes (*censum et munera anualia ut moris kenesiatus*) for their two estates – the Higher Măcicaș and *Alsothewis*¹¹⁸. They had gained at the nobility judgement of the district due to an older privilege act exempting them from taxes.

Caransebeș had been not only the district residence where the common meetings of the knezes and nobles took place, but it had also been the main center for the common judgement forums of the 8 districts from the mountainous Banat. The act from the 22nd of January 1452 had been issued as a consequence of the meeting of the seven Romanian districts that had taken place at Sebeș ("*sedem scilicet iudiciariam principalem septem sedium nobilium Walahicalium*")¹¹⁹.

The information concerning the patrimonial situation of the villages from the district Sebeș, very important for the 15th century, certify social realities represented by Romanian knezial and nobility ownership, as for

¹¹³ V. Achim, *Banatica*, 9, 1987, p. 371-378.

¹¹⁴ Pesty, *Szörény*, III, p. 33, "*universitas nobilium et keneshorum districtus Sebeș*".

¹¹⁵ Idem, *Krasso*, III, p. 371.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 402-40.

¹¹⁷ Idem, *Szörény*, III, p. 56-57.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

example the families Bizere, Mâtnic, Măcicaș and Fiat of Armeniș. The representatives of the Romanian upper class had played a very important role also as concern the leadership of the district Sebeș. Thus, Dionisie of Mâtnic and Bogdan of Mâtnic, Nicolae of Bizere and Ioan of Bizere or Fiat of Armeniș had been constantly present at the public meetings of the district¹²⁰.

The district Haram is known from a document from 1444 that mentions "*opidum desertum walahicale Keowseg appellatum in districtu de Haram*"¹²¹. A piece of information from 1473 mentions the settlements Potoc, Gyano and Duplay "*in comitatu Haram*"¹²². The summary news referring to the settlements from the district do not allow appreciation concerning the boundaries and their functional mechanisms during the 15th century¹²³. The district had grouped the Romanian settlements at the river mouths of the Caraș and of the Nera into the Danube and between Haram and Pojejena in the Danubian sector.

The district Ilidia had occupied the southern zone of the depression Oravița, at the foot of the Mounts Anina and in the Caraș plain. The valley of the brook Vicinic had been the axis along which the villages from the centre of the district had gravitated. A document from 1312, that had mentioned the villages Rusova, Patrug and Mateteleke "*in comitatu de Elyed*" confirms its existence in the southern space of Banat¹²⁴. The documents from the middle of the 14th century concerning the estate Valea bring very important information for the knowledge of the social realities from the district. The estate Valea is mentioned in 1342 in the western extremity of the district Ilidia owned by the Romanians Mihai, Ioan and Nicolae, Petru's sons who was Timan's son¹²⁵. Because of a dispossession and of a long process in 1378, it had got into the nobles Himfy's possession¹²⁶. This case of dispossession and forced occupation of a knezial possession has similitude with those happened in the district Cuiești, at Biniș, in 1349, or on the two estates Secaș from the district Caraș. Even if isolated, these cases illustrate an aspect of the Angevine royalty policy during the king Louis I reign, of restriction of the autonomy of the Romanian districts¹²⁷. The boundary acts of the estate Valea from 1363 and 1378, mark out a part of the western boundary of the district Ilidia. The river

¹²⁰ V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 374 seq.

¹²¹ Csanki, *MH*, II, p. 97.

¹²² *Ibidem*, p. 93; Milleker, *DKF*, p. 94; Györffy, *ATF*, III, p. 484.

¹²³ Z. Păclișanu, *RIR*, 13, 3, 1943, p. 23.

¹²⁴ Gy. Györffy, *op. cit.*, III, p. 485.

¹²⁵ Pesty, *Krassó*, III, p. 138, "*quendam locum pro perpetua residencia ipsorum in districtu de Elyed in loco Patac*".

¹²⁶ M. Holban, *SMIM*, II, 1957, p. 96 seq.

¹²⁷ V. Achim, *Banatica*, 12, 2, 1993, p. 50-51.

Caraș, in the plain between Iam and Vrani, separated the county of the fortress Ersumlow from the county of the district Ilidia where there had been the villages Valea, *Ztankfalva*, the village of the knezes Ilie and Stefan. Along the Vicinic, where the southern boundary had been, the villages Rusova and Berliște are known from the acts from 1312 and 1378. The northern boundary run along the summits of the Mounts Anina in the zone from the Nera Gorges to Agadici where there had been the settlements of the district Caraș. The boundary act of the estate *Zegerin* on the 7th of May 1367 mentions the estates *Potoc*, *Zegerien* and *Radamlia* in the south of the fortress Ilidia. They had occupied a part of the lower summits of the Mounts Locva that had probably belonged to the district Ilidia¹²⁸. On the basis of few informations from the 14th century, the boundaries of the district Ilidia had limited a space measuring about 400 km. The actual settlements Berliște, Rusova, Ciuchici, Sasca Română, Potoc, Ilidia, Socolari, Ciclova Română, Răcășia, Vraniuț and Oravița are within these boundaries. The disposition and concentration of the settlements along the brook Vicinic suggest that a social formation of valley knezdom type had been at the origin of the district Ilidia. The verifications on the ground in the Vicinic valley and of Ciclova identified hearths of settlements from the 8th-13th centuries located in the same zone of the valleys¹²⁹.

The documents from the 14th-15th centuries, confirmed by ground investigations, certify 21 settlements in the district and 15 of them had existed since the 14th century¹³⁰. The villages known from the documents of the 14th century had represented knezial ownership. The Romanian social states from the district are known, for this stage, from the acts of the process of the knezes on the estates Valea. The transformations inside the Romanian nobility during the 15th century, its ascendancy among the nobles are reflected in the documents from 1464 that confirm the ownership of domain of six villages for the nobles Ioan, George, Mihai and another George from Vrani. They had received with the title of new donation the ownership of the estates Ciclova, Ciuchici, *Werbolcz*, *Marincolcz*, *Dichin I* and Lugot. In the same conditions of keeping their estates the other nobles from the district¹³¹. The royal fortress had been located in the southeastern part of the district, in the zone of the high hills from Socolari at the foot of the Anina Mounts. Its castellans, the representatives of the central power within the district had been known since 1319 and 1325-1326¹³². The estate

¹²⁸ DRH, C, XIII, p. 359.

¹²⁹ Pesty, *Oláh kerületek*, p. 10-11; St. Pascu, *op. cit.*, p. 49; M. Bizerea, C. Rudeanu, *op. cit.*, p. 10. D. Teicu, *Banatica*, 9, 1987, p. 320, for the structure of the medieval habitat archaeologically investigated in the depression Oravița

¹³⁰ Pesty, *Oláh kerületek*, p. 10-11.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 77.

¹³² Györffy, *op. cit.*, III, p. 485.

Ilidia had been mentioned in the papal act from 1223 among other possessions from the dowry of Margaret, daughter of King Bella III. This matter brings into discussion the control of the Hungarian royalty over the zone even at the end of the 12th century¹³³. The archaeological investigations offer very important references about the existence of a feudal court on the hill Oblia, where a dwelling tower had been pointed out from the middle of the 12th century¹³⁴. The existence of a catholic parish at Ilidia during 1333-1334 is linked to the presence of the castellan and of a feudal court.

Documents from the 14th-15th centuries have kept extremely few testimonies concerning the local realities in the district Ilidia, on whose basis the administrative and judicial organization can be reconstituted. Among the seven knezial meetings documented in the 14th century, only one participation of the knezes from the district Ilidia besides those from Sebeş has been recorded. The 15th century sources do not offer a more conclusive documentation as concerns this matter, too. Thus, excepting the privilege act from 1457 and of some undated testimonies about the knezes from the district Mehadia, Ilidia and Liubcova¹³⁵, the social and institutional realities of the district Ilidia remained outside the interest sphere of the feudal chancelleries. The presentation of the Romanian knezial and nobility families that had had undoubtedly a very important role in the organizing structures of the district can not be done because of the existent historical sources. Due to the document from 1464, it has been outlined the existence of the Romanian nobles from Vrani who had owned six villages in the valley of the brooks Vicinic and Vrani.

The district Liubcova had developed within the boundaries of the Depression Liubcova at the Iron Gates of the Danube. The depression zone is outlined in the Danubian passage from Liborajdea to Drencova measuring 16 km in length, bounded towards the north and the north-west by the lower summits of the Locva Mounts, and towards the North-east by the Almăj Mounts.

The existence of this political-institutional structure within the local autonomies in Banat had been documentary certified in the 15th century. The nobles and the knezes from the district Liubcova had been mentioned in a act from the 15th century besides those from the district Ilidia and Mehadia¹³⁶. The location of the settlements within the district can be done on the basis of the information offered by written sources from the middle of the 16th century and field collections. About 200 km² were occupied

¹³³ L. Tăutu, *Antemurale*, III, p. 51-79; idem, *Mélanges E. Tisserant*, III, 2, p. 379, 391-393.

¹³⁴ I.A. Pop, *Instituții medievale românești*, Cluj-Napoca, 1991, p. 68.

¹³⁵ Csánki D., *op. cit.*, II, p. 104.

¹³⁶ Ibidem, p. 104.

almost entirely by mountains, and between 1554-1570, nine settlements of which only seven survived had existed in that space¹³⁷. The existence of the villages Gornea, Sichevița, Berzasca and Drencova since the 12th-13th centuries have been archaeologically proved. The Hungarian kingdom had spread its control in this zone even since the 13th century as the fortification level from this period in the fortress from Pescari suggest¹³⁸. The fortress from Drencova, located in the eastern extremity of the depression Liubcova had been donated with the villages and the district to the Romanian nobles Mihail, Blaslu and Nicolae of Cerna besides Nicolae of Bizere and the king Albert. The ownership acts over the fortress and the villages (*literalia instrumenta ... ipsum castrum Dranko comitatumque necnon villas*) had been destroyed during the wars against the Turks. That is why the meeting of the Romanian nobles from the seven districts had confirmed the ownership of the nobles of Bizere and Cerna in June 1451¹³⁹.

The organization of the district Liubcova has to be seen as following the structure of an already existent valley knezdom, along the brook Sichevița, with its nucleus in the settlement from Cornea. Its valley had occupied an important position in zone and had been an access way towards the Almăj Depression. The district Liubcova had not been among the local autonomies in the 15th century whose privileges had been confirmed again through the act from 1457. The district had got in the ownership of the Romanian nobles of the families Bizere and Cerna in the same time with the fortress Drencova.

The district Mehadia had occupied a passage zone that connected the Danube basin to the north of Banat, disposed in the prolongation of the depression Caransebeș. It had been constituted within the naturally limited space of the depression Mehadica and on the inferior course of the Cerna. The existence of a Romanian organizing structure in the south-eastern corner of the Banat Mountains had been confirmed in the donation act of the estate Valea Bolvașnița on the 19th of July 1376¹⁴⁰. The king Louis I had confirmed to the Romanians Bogdan, Dimitrie, Toma and Vlasiu the ownership of "the estate named Valea Bolvașnița, on the river Bolvașnița, that was situated in the district Mehadia"¹⁴¹.

The total reconstitution of the district boundaries is possible with the help of the references found in the chancellery acts of the 14th-15th centuries. The northern boundary had been limited by the courses of Pârâul Rece (Hideg) at the foot of the Mounts Țarcu and by the upper course of Timiș below the summits of the Mounts Semenic. In 1392, the knezes of Timișel,

¹³⁷ Engel, *TMTT*, p. 80, 86, 113 and the map.

¹³⁸ St. Matei, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

¹³⁹ Pesly Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 61-63.

¹⁴⁰ C. Feneșan, *Banatica*, 5, 1979, p. 272.

¹⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 272.

Petru, Halmag, Cristofor and Mihail had had possessions in this zone of the district Mehadia¹⁴². The act from 1447 mentions the two Criva, Timișel and Teregova on the upper course of Timiș and the Higher Hideg in the valley of the brook with the same name among the nobles' estates¹⁴³. The district Mehadia had had a common boundary with the district from the Bârzava's springs on the even plateau of the Mounts Semenici. The estate of Grădiște, Higher Timișel and the two estates Strâmba from "*districtu Nag Mihald*"¹⁴⁴ had been located in this mountainous zone. A part of the eastern boundary of the district had been along the summits of Semenici that had closed the depression Mehadica in this zone. The estates Luncavița Mare, Luncavița Mică and Toplicean, which had been owned by the nobles of Timișel in 1440, had been located on the eastern branch of the depression Mehadica¹⁴⁵. The villages and the estates that were owned by the Romanian nobles of Cerna at the beginning of the 15th century had limited the southern and southwestern extremity of the district. On the lower course of Cerna, guarded by the summits of the Anina Mounts and the Mounts Mehedinți, the Topleț, Cerna, Iardaștița and Propodna estates were located, confirmed by an act dated on the 3rd of May 1436 as being owned by the Romanian nobles of Cerna¹⁴⁶. Diplomatic sources from the 14th-15th centuries offer a few references concerning the settlements on the eastern edge of the depression Mehadica among the summits of Cerna Mounts and the Pârâul Rece. The small basin from Cornereva, on the superior course of the river Belareca, had offered favorable conditions to the existence of some settlements as those from Cornereva and Bogâltin, even since the anterior period.

The Romanian district Mehadia had measured about 850 km from the mountainous space of Banat, and the written sources from the 14th-15th centuries had registered thirty settlements¹⁴⁷. The identification of the hearth of the medieval villages and the investigation of the households and of the knezial and nobility courts are a priority of the future investigations of the medieval archaeology. Nevertheless, it is remarked the contributions of the archaeological excavations from Mehadia and Cuptoare to the knowledge of the habitat within the district Mehadia.

As concerns the ethnic-demographic state of the zone, documents from the 14th-15th centuries do not mention the presence of some foreign communities, but they had pointed out the existence of a Romanian unitary

¹⁴² Pesty Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 14, "*in possessionibus Hydech et Temesin vocatis in districtu de Mihald*".

¹⁴³ Pesty, *Oláh kerületek*, p. 71.

¹⁴⁴ Pesty Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 154.

¹⁴⁵ C. Feneșan, *DMB*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁶ Pesty Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 31.

¹⁴⁷ Pesty, *Oláh kerületek*, p. 46 sqq.

block. In the district Mehadia, the same historical sources point out Romanian social states as some knezial ownership, similar to those from the neighboring districts from the southern Banat. The estate Potoc from the district Mehadia had been a knezial ownership and the confirmation document from 1387 had illustrated the social-knezial state of Petru, Dees of Timișel's son¹⁴⁸. The members of the family of Timișel, Petru, Halmag, Cristofor and Mihail, who had owned together the estates Criva and Potoc in 1390, had been named "*nobilium keneziorum de Temeshe*"¹⁴⁹. It is no doubt that the Romanian Bogdan, Șurian, Dimitrie and Toma in the Valea Bolvașnița, in 1376, had had the same social statute, even if the documents had not mentioned it clearly. The donation acts of the estates Criva and Potoc for the knezes of Timișel had been conditioned to accomplish some fiscal and military obligations to which the other knezial ownership from the district had been subjected to. In 1430, 224 knezdoms in the district had been mentioned in the acts of the Teutons' order¹⁵⁰.

Few documents from the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century bring testimonies about the internal organizing of the district and the functioning of the own institution, the Romanian knezes and nobles' meeting within the local autonomy. The reconfirmation act of the ownership of the estates Criva and Potoc for the knezes of Timișel on the 16th of March 1390, a common meeting of the nobles and another condition people from the counties Sebeș, Lugoj and Mehadia¹⁵¹. It had a confirmation role, the Romanian nobles from the three districts confirming the lost of the property acts for the estates Criva and Potoc, near the Mount Padeș during the attack of the Walalchian ruler. Therefore, as one has already noticed, the royal chancellery act lets distinguish Romanian realities, even if it does not explicitly mention the meeting of the Romanian knezes and nobles from the three districts¹⁵². In 1428, the meeting of the Romanian nobles and knezes from the district (*in congregacione nostra generali universitati nobilium kenesorumque ac alterius status districtus nostri Myhald vocati*) had taken place in the presence of the king Sigismund of Luxembourg¹⁵³. The district meeting had decided in a property process started before 1402 when it had been already judged in another meeting. The conflict for the estates Iablanita, Zalyinia and Kendmezey had been judged in 1402 in a meeting of the district Mehadia. The castellans of Sebeș, Ioan nicknamed Bologh and Mihail of Vrani, Stoian of Cerna,

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 51-52, "*Petri fili Dees kenezi districtum castri regalis Michald*".

¹⁴⁹ Pesty Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 10.

¹⁵⁰ Al. Nemoianu, *MN*, 2, 1975, p. 381 seq.; I. Hateganu, *Tibiscus*, 5, 1978, p. 193.

¹⁵¹ Pesty Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 10-11, "*a nobilibus et alterius status hominibus comitatum Sebus, Lugas et Myhald*".

¹⁵² I.A. Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 122; V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 921.

¹⁵³ Pesty, *Oláh kerületek*, p. 59-60.

Ladislau, Pethen's son, Farcaș, Bogdan of Mătrnic's son had taken part as arbitrators and the nobles from the districts Sebeș and Mehadia¹⁵⁴. With judicial functions, the general meeting of the district Mehadia from 1428 had discussed the conflict for the above-mentioned knezdoms, confirming the decisions of the meeting from 1402 through which the villages Iablanita and Zalyn had come back to the nobles of Timișel. The cause on role had been judged also in 1428 by an unspecified number of juries chosen from the knezes and nobles that had been participating to the meeting¹⁵⁵. The district Mehadia had been represented, in January 1452, to the united judicial meeting of the seven districts by Ioan, the son of the ruler of Mehadia, besides Mihail Dees of Timișel, Olchul of Bogăltin and Ladislau Deze of Domașnea. The documents between 1439-1452 certify the existence of a ruling function within the district Mehadia whose functions during the district meetings had been considered judicial¹⁵⁶. The perpetuation of this function within the Romanian institutions during the 15th century can be appreciated from the point of view of the Romanian compact aspect that the mountainous zone of Banat had had and of the preservation of the judicial autonomy. The social ascents of some knezial families from the district are illustrated by the role that the Romanian nobles of Cerna and Timișel had played at the beginning of the 15th century.

At the beginning of the 14th century, the chancellery documents mention the districts as political and institutional structures specific of the Romanian society from Banat. Villages in the Vicinic valley, in the zone of Oravița Hills, appear organized within the district Ildia in 1312. Around 1350, documents had already certified the existence of the district Sebeș, on the upper course of Timiș and of the district Cuiești among the summits of Dognecea Mounts. Subsequently, to the end of the 14th century, the districts from the Bârzava's springs, Comiat, Caran and Mehadia are mentioned too in the mountainous space of Banat. There had existed an institutional organization specific to the Romanian world. The chancellery documents from the 14th century, which bring in the foreground the Romanian districts, mention these institutional structures using a terminology similar to the institutions of the Hungarian kingdom: *comitatus*, *provincia*, *pertinentiae* and *districtus*¹⁵⁷, and the privilege act from 1451 nominalizes the districts of Banat using the word *sedes*¹⁵⁸. Sometimes,

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 59; the data of the process and of the meeting from 1402 can be found at I.A. Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 128-129; V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

¹⁵⁵ Pesty, *Oláh kerületek*, p. 61.

¹⁵⁶ Pesty Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 64; V. Achim, *SMIM*, 13, 1994, p. 105-106, 114-115, he analyses the voivodes' presence and their functions within the Romanian districts from Banat.

¹⁵⁷ V. Motogna, *op. cit.*, p. 299; St. Pascu, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 43, 50.

¹⁵⁸ Pesty Fr., *Szörény*, III, p. 63.

one had tried to use in the act the same equivalent terms so that the act from 1366 had mentioned "*provincia seu districtu de Sebeș*"¹⁵⁹.

The problems of the medieval districts from Banat have not benefited yet by a monographic approach since 1876, when they entered the field of historical investigation, even if they have gained a rich bibliography. Thus, a series of matters concerning the origin of districts, the moment of their organizing, their place and role within the institutions of the Hungarian kingdom wait for an unitary approach.

The moment of organizing the districts during the 10th-14th centuries has been differently appreciated in historiography because of few sources and of the lacunal character of the information. St. Pascu, dealing with the problem of the institutions in the Transylvania principality, has connected the moment of organizing the districts to the constitution of the knezdoms and principalities. Thus, he went back with the genesis of this Romanian political-administrative institution, even if he did not tell it explicitly, to a period anterior to the 10th century¹⁶⁰. However, this generous idea was not upheld with documentary arguments or analogies of historical situations in the neighboring spaces. But, an identical opinion concerning the age of the districts and their organization on the structure of some previous social and political structures can be found at V. Motogna and other promoters of the local history of Banat grouped around the Social Institute Banat-Crișana from the inter-war period¹⁶¹. V. Motogna considered the origin of the districts in confederations of knezdoms grouped around a military nucleus called "*jupa*". The Hungarian royalty, through the bans of Severin, had taken the control of that *jupae* calling them districts. Silviu Dragomir¹⁶² had dealt with the idea of the origin and evolution of the districts from Banat during the period of the Wallachian - Romanian state community that had existed at least in the 9th century AD. The names of places from Banat that certify the existence of the institution of *jupa* are anterior to the 11th century, when these institutions had been on the wane at the Slavic peoples, and the Hungarian kingdom had started organizing the system of the royal counties. Thus, the districts of Banat would have the same age.

In analyzing the administrative and political structures for Transylvania in a synthesis of the national history, determined Fr. Pall appreciates that the Romanian districts had appeared in the same time with the Szeklers' counties and *scaune* ("chairs") at the beginning of the 13th century under

¹⁵⁹ DRH. D. I, p. 97; Pesty, *Szörény*, III, p. 17, "*in districtu sive provincia Sebeș*" in 1411.

¹⁶⁰ St. Pascu, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 13.

¹⁶¹ V. Motogna, *op. cit.*, p. 17; N. Tomiciu, *op. cit.*, p. 597; G. Cotoșman, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

¹⁶² S. Dragomir, *Dacoromania*, I, 1921, p. 147-148, 161.

the name of "countries"¹⁶³. The case of the districts of Banat has constituted a main preoccupation of V. Achim. His social and institutional history researches locate the apparition of this institution towards the middle of the 14th century¹⁶⁴. The moment of the apparition of the districts into the mountainous space of Banat has been considered as an effective inclusion of the region in the administrative system of the Hungarian kingdom as ethnic-territorial autonomy. The historiography's ideas from the beginning of the 20th century that appreciated the districts a form of the Hungarian administration resulted as a consequence of the policy of colonization of the Romanians, did not have a documentary support¹⁶⁵.

The lacunal character of the sources generated very different appreciation concerning the moment of organizing districts. The reconstitution of the Romanian social-political structures from Banat in the 14th-15th centuries can not be done just on the basis of the written sources and in the context of the ensemble situation of the social-political structures from this zone of the western Lower Danube. In the moment of their official registering in the chancellery documents at the middle of the 14th century, the districts had undoubtedly existed for a long while. The case of the district Ilidia, already existent in 1312, proves that a part of the districts had been organized as early as the 13th century. The spreading policy of the Hungarian kingdom to the western Lower Danube in the south-eastern European political context at the beginning of the 13th century had created "the new framework of the Romanian history"¹⁶⁶ that had undoubtedly a strong impact also on the political structures proper to the Romanian society. These institutional forms had been integrated in the structures of the Arpadian kingdom together with the autonomies preserved. Organizing the Banat of Severin at the beginning of the 13th century, preceded by the organizing of the county Caraș in the west of the Banat Mountains, meant the control of the intra- mountainous space of Banat and of the access ways to the Danube. The expansion of the Arpadian kingdom had an impact on the habitat of the space in the south of Banat, but also on the Romanian territorial-political structures. Written sources that had explicitly certified the existence and the way of organizing the districts during the 13th century are lack. Nevertheless, on the basis of information at the beginning of the 14th century, one can appreciate their existence even since the 13th century. The integration of the districts in the

¹⁶³ Fr. Pall, *Istoria României*, II, p. 263.

¹⁶⁴ V. Achim, *SMIM*, XII, 1994, p. 111

¹⁶⁵ Turchany T. *Krassó-Szörény vámege*, I, p. 196; the same ideas that upholds the imposing of some social and political structures of the Romanian society after the 13th century by the Arpadian royalty can be found in *Histoire de la Transilvanie*, édition by Béla Köpeczi, 1992, p. 193

¹⁶⁶ S. Papacostea, *Românii în secolul al XIII-lea*, p. 66 seq.

political-administrative system of the Hungarian kingdom had been done in the second half of the 13th century and the beginning of the next century, in the same time with the presence of the castellans and of the royal fortresses in the districts. The analysis of each district from the mountainous zone of Banat proved that the organizing of these structures had been done in the naturally limited zones where knezdoms and *jupa* had functioned. The already registered results of the investigations of the Romanian social-political structures from Hațeg, identical to those from Banat, support this assertion. Analyzing the relations between "the country" and "the district" Hațeg from the territorial and institutional point of view, Radu Popa has proved that the district Hațeg had perpetuated a Romanian pre-state social-political structure within the same territorial limits¹⁶⁷.

The origin of the districts of Banat as well as those from the neighboring zones can be found in the structures proper to the Romanian society at the beginning of the 12th century. They reflect, as one has already remarked in historiography, the stage of archaic organizing of the Romanian society from the historical sources since the 13th century¹⁶⁸. In the moment of their registering in the written sources of the 14th century, the districts had appeared as manifestations of some local autonomy in the virtue of some old customs but integrated into the feudal system of the Angevine royalty¹⁶⁹. Deciphering of the internal mechanisms of the districts, judicial, political and military attributions within the Romanian world have been pointed out in historiography so much as they had been reflected in the written sources of the 14th-15th centuries. The district meeting sometimes called public meeting or only knezial and nobility meeting of the district had enjoyed a special attention of the historical investigation¹⁷⁰. Given the lack of documentation, we can not firmly appreciate how the institutional attributions from the 10th-12th centuries had been transmitted in the chancellery acts of the 14th-15th centuries.

The documents from Banat had mentioned the meeting of the district Sebeș in 1369 as "*universitas kenesiorum et alium olachorum*" while the meeting from Mehadia in 1428 had been mentioned as "*congrezione generall universitati nobillium kenesiorumque*"¹⁷¹. The act issued in 1369, following the first known meeting of the district Caransebeș, is extremely

¹⁶⁷ R. Popa, *Țara Hațegului*, p. 259.

¹⁶⁸ S. Papacostea, *Românii în secolul al XIII-lea*, p. 57-58, definitory elements of these Romanian "countries" (terra) had been the political, military and ecclesiastic structures coagulated within these countries.

¹⁶⁹ N. Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, III, 1993, p. 164-165, 193; V. Achim, *AnB*, 2, 1993, p. 245.

¹⁷⁰ I.A. Pop, *Instituții medievale românești*, p. 58 seq.; V. Achim, *Rd I*, 41, 2, 1988, p. 191-203. idem, *Rl*, 3, 9-10, 1992, p. 917-927; idem, *SMIM*, 12, 1994, p. 111 seq.

¹⁷¹ DRH, D. I, 1977, p. 98. Pesty, *Oláh kenőleték*, p. 59; I.A. Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

important for the knowledge of the initial administrative and military role of the districts. The knezes from the district had had military obligations both for guarding the boundaries and for the military actions outside the kingdom's boundaries. One can find out in the mentioned document that during the actions from Bulgaria, in 1365, the knezes had accompanied the royal army with their troops "and we all with them entered Vidin following the custom of those who are in army"¹⁷². They had also taken part to the expeditions in the Wallachia. From the moment of starting the conflict two hundred people had lived in the mountains day and night till the winter had come. Moreover, they and five hundred of the best men had remained there in Mehadia¹⁷³. The document clearly mentions the knezes' obligation to organize and fit out the troops. This obligation is also met later in the confirmation of some knezial ownership. Thus, the knezes of Timișel from the district Mehadia had received the confirmation act of the ownership of the estates Potoc and Criva. In exchange, he was supposed to accompany the Hungarian king's army in his actions in the Wallachia with a lance of soldiers, following the custom of the other noble knezes in the district¹⁷⁴. The king Ladislau V's diploma from 1457, confirming the autonomy of the eight Romanian districts, admits their military role at the Danube's fords.

The knezial and nobility meetings in the district had had also fiscal attributions that had settled the relations of the Romanian Orthodox world with the central power. The same act of the Romanian community from the district Caransebeș had mentioned, in 1369, expenses of 264 florins for the town and 150 florins for the district because of the Byzantine Emperor Ioan V the Paleolog's passage to Buda¹⁷⁵. However, the most eloquent testimony of functioning of some internal mechanisms within the districts that had settled fiscal matters can be found in the action of the district Comiat ended through the diploma from August 29, 1457. The king Sigismund of Luxembourg had pledged between 1435 and 1437 the district Comiat for 2750 florins to lancu of Hunedoara. The Romanian community of the district had gathered and returned that sum of money to redeem the pledge and to integrate the district among those ones with accepted privileges in the same year¹⁷⁶.

The functioning of a Romanian institution and the knezial and nobiliary meetings in the districts had illustrated the Romanians' judicial autonomy. I.A. Pop and V. Achim's persevering analyses reconstituted regressively

¹⁷² DRH, D, I, p. 97, "we entered that army with our fortune and also with our bodies".

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 97

¹⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 124-125; A. Andea, *op. cit.*, p. 135; V. Motogna, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁷⁵ DRH, D, I, p. 97; N. Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 164-165.

¹⁷⁶ Pesty, *Oláh kenőleték*, p. 75-76; V. Achim, *AnB*, 2, 1993, p. 250.

the organizing, the composition and competence of this Romanian medieval institution¹⁷⁷. The effort of the investigation focussed on the initial original characteristics of the institution from Banat and its evolution under the influence of the institutions of the Hungarian feudal state¹⁷⁸.

The confirmation act of the ownership of the land in the Mâtnic Valley on the 8th of November 1352 for Bogdan and Iuga, Ștefan of Mâtnic's sons, had stipulated the limits of the knezial jurisdiction. They had had the right to judge "any causes, excepting three of them: pilfering, robbery and fire, and if such causes happened to be, they had been obliged to send them to the county lord at Sebeș"¹⁷⁹. The documents of the 14th century point out the judicial role of the Romanian knezial and nobility meetings from the districts. They had had to prove some knezial ownership. Subsequently, during the 15th century, the common meetings of the districts had discussed trials and lawsuits. The corroboration of the information from the chancellery acts with the judicial stipulations of the diploma from 1457 had contributed to the understanding of the judicial attributions of the district meetings. The diploma issued on the 29th of August 1457 stipulated that the Romanian nobles and knezes could be judged only by the chieftain "*nobilibus valachis et kenesis ut nulles eas tempore constitutum*"¹⁸⁰. The information from the chancellery acts point out that those judgements had taken place just at the knezes and nobles meeting from the district led by the castellans of the fortresses from that zone¹⁸¹. The *voivodes* certified in districts had been judges of the nobles with a role in convocation and leadership of the knezial and nobility meetings¹⁸², as the few testimonies from the 14th-15th centuries prove.

The causes discussed in the judicial forum of the district had been judged following the norms of the Romanian law. The meeting of the Romanian nobles from the district Caransebeș, in the presence of the nobles' knez (*judices nobilium districtus Karansebeș*) had judged an action of the noble from Vlad against George Găman of Bizere accused, in 1478, by firing a mill. The noble Bizere had been obliged by the judgement forum to swear, with other twelve persons following the old law of the Romanian districts (*juxta antiquam et approbatam legem districtum volahicalium*)¹⁸³. The appliance of the norms of the Romanian laws (*jure volachie*) had been met in lawsuits and mentioned in the act on the 1st of October 1500 or in the case of an estate pledge as in the case in the district Comiat in

¹⁷⁷ *Supra* note 169.

¹⁷⁸ V. Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 112, I.A. Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 58 seq.

¹⁷⁹ DRH, C, X, p. 161.

¹⁸⁰ Pestly, *Krassó*, III, p. 404.

¹⁸¹ V. Achim, *SMIM*, 12, 1994, p. 112-113.

¹⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 116-117.

¹⁸³ Pestly, *Oláh kerületek*, p. 82-83; G. Ciulei, *Banatica*, 7, 1983, p. 334 seq.

The tendencies of violation of the Romanians' judicial autonomy in the districts had provoked manifestations of Romanian solidarity in the districts from the Bârzava's springs or from Almăj at the beginning of the 15th century. Thus, the knezes and nobles from the district Almăj, who had been in conflict with Emeric Himfy in 1430, had refused to be present at the judgement at the term established by Nicolae of Radewitz. They had accepted the judgement of the case just in front of the royal court¹⁶⁵. The privileged diploma from 1457 had officially established the framework in which the Romanian knezes and nobles to be judged. Thus, the way of collecting fines had been also settled¹⁶⁶. The analysis of "the liberties, prerogatives and rights"¹⁶⁷ gained by the districts from Banat point out the ethnic and territorial autonomy that they had enjoyed during the 14th-15th centuries. The knezial and nobiliary meetings from the districts constitute the most important Romanian medieval institution that had functioned within these local autonomies.

4. The Beginnings of Organizing the Churches in the Mountainous Banat (The 10th-13th Centuries) Romanian Society against the Catholic Offensive (The 13th-15th Centuries)

The problem of hierarchical organizing of the church to the Romanians has been a preoccupation of long tradition of the Romanian historiography that has aroused contradictory opinions. The historical sources from the beginning of the Middle Age have brought a little light over the Romanians' church life. The Latin origin of the early Christianity and the use of a Slavonic language at messes have singled out the history of the Romanians' church life in the context of the southeastern European medieval history¹⁶⁸. It was admitted that the moment of adopting the Slav mess

¹⁶⁴ Pesty, *Szörény*, III, p. 135; idem, *Krassó*, III, p. 476. The noble Gabre from Călugăreni had announced his intention of pledge of some parts from the estates Călugăreni, Măgoiești, Răchita and Strâmtura "*iuxta ritum volachie*".

¹⁶⁵ Pesty, *Szörény*, III, p. 24-25; A. Andea, *op. cit.*, p. 114-115; I.A. Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

¹⁶⁶ Pesty, *Krassó*, III, p. 405, in case of fines, confiscation of horses, arms and hunting falcons had been forbidden

¹⁶⁷ Ibidem, p. 404, "*comun libertatibus, prerogativis et juribus confecta, ac si presentibus literis nostris de verbum ad verbum inserta essent*"

¹⁶⁸ P.P. Panaitescu, *Interpretări românești*, ed. II, București, 1993, p. 48 "a Romanic people, a unique fact in history, had adopted as a liturgical language the Slavonic church language".

on the entire north - Danubian space could be included into the 10th century, in a period anterior to the Hungarian occupation. In the conditions of some objective historical interpretations, the explanation of this phenomenon can be found in the political and social-cultural influence of the Bulgarian State¹⁸⁹. Despite all the different opinions concerning the duration and the geographical spreading in the space in the north of the Danube, the ownership of the first Bulgarian tsardom during the 9th-10th centuries remains a historical event sustained by the narrative sources of the epoch¹⁹⁰. The penetration of the Slav mess, in the 9th-10th centuries, in the Romanian Christian environment in the north of the Danube and the imposing of an ecclesiastic structure come from the Bulgarian church seem to be natural historical evolutions in the existent political framework. The phenomenon seems to be more plausible during the period when the institutional church structures had been tightly linked to the political structures of the time¹⁹¹.

Documents of the Byzantine Imperial Chancellery from 1019 and 1020, known from later elaboration, inform about the beginnings of the hierarchical church organizing in the space of Banat. The Emperor Vasile II (976-1025) had established the judicial situation of the Bulgarian Patriarchy from Ohrida¹⁹² through the three edicts from 1019-1020, after the conquest of the first Bulgarian tsardom. The emperor had proved to have a remarkable political sense maintaining the territorial integrity of this ecclesiastic structure through his adopted decisions. The Bulgarian Patriarchy from Ohrida had been transformed into an autocephalous archbishopric eluded from the control of the patriarchy from Constantinople, which had enjoyed an important ecclesiastic autonomy inside the Byzantine Empire¹⁹³. The documents issued by the emperor Vasile II had brought important data concerning the canonic situation within the archbishopric from Ohrida and, equally, concerning its geographical spreading¹⁹⁴. Thus, the bishoprics from Branicevo, Belgrade and Simium¹⁹⁵ had been mentioned at the western Lower Danube.

¹⁸⁹ Ibidem, p. 48; G. Brătianu, *O enigmă și un miracol istoric: poporul român*, București, 1988, p. 142; I.A. Pop, *Românii și maghiarii în secolele IX-XIV*, Cluj-Napoca, 1996, p. 39-40; G. Brătianu, *Sfatul domnesc și adunarea stărilor în Principatele Române*, București, 1995, p. 35.

¹⁹⁰ A. Decei, *Relațiile româno-orientale*, I, 1978, p. 44 seq., with the older bibliography of the problem; V. Spinei, *op. cit.*, p. 49; P.P. Panaitescu, *op. cit.*, p. 49; Gy. Moravcsik, *Studia Byzantina*, Budapesta, 1967, p. 331.

¹⁹¹ N. Iorga, *Studii asupra evului mediu românesc*, edition by S. Papacostea, București, 1984, p. 95

¹⁹² H. Gelzer, *BZ*, 2, 1893, p. 41-43; Gy. Moravcsik, *Bizantinoturcica*, I, 1942, p. 114.

¹⁹³ M. Gyóni, *RHC*, 25, 1, 1947, p. 44

¹⁹⁴ Idem, *ESR*, I, 3, 1948, p. 149.

¹⁹⁵ Ibidem, p. 150-151.

The bishopric from Branicevo had had an Episcopal "camp" at Tibiscum, too, in the middle of the mountainous space of Banat. M. Gyóni proved, more than half of century ago, the identification of the Episcopal "camp" Tibiscum at Jupa on the bank of the Timiș¹⁹⁶. In the same edict from 1019, within the bishopric from Belgrade, he mentioned an Episcopal "camp" from Biserica Albă (Bela Crkva)¹⁹⁷. So, we have the proof of the existence of two ecclesiastic structures, around 1020, in the Nera Valley and the Timiș Valley, subordinated to the bishoprics from Branicevo and Belgrade that had activated in the middle of the Romanian population in the south of Banat. The Emperor Vasile II's acts had maintained an older situation in the new framework of the bishopric of Ohrida, which had existed even since the Bulgarian czar Samuel's rule at the end of the 10th century¹⁹⁸. We can appreciate that the beginnings of the church organizing in the southern space of Banat can be found during the 10th century, during a period of political, cultural and religious domination of the first Bulgarian tsardom.

Establishing of the Byzantine frontiers at the beginning of the 11th century along the Danube, organization of a theme¹⁹⁹ and its maintaining until 1185 had had repercussions upon the structures of the Orthodox Church from Banat. The Danube bishoprics from Branicevo and Belgrade had manifested their canonic control during the 11th-12th centuries over the religious centers that had existed and had been organized in Banat. The role of the Byzantine church in organizing the church and monastic life, in the space of the western Lower Danube to the south of Hungary, in the 11th-12th centuries, is upheld by the Byzantine historical sources as well as by some archaeological discoveries²⁰⁰. Gy. Moravcsik appreciated that about 600 Greek monasteries had existed in the Hungarian kingdom during the 11th-12th centuries. These monasteries had existed up to the beginning of the 13th century when they had been gradually occupied by the western monastic orders²⁰¹.

The existence and organizing of some orthodox monasteries in the space of the southern Banat during the 10th-12th centuries had remained beyond the interest sphere of the medieval chancelleries, and the medi-

¹⁹⁶ Idem, *RHC*, p. 45-46; I.D. Suciu, *Monografia Mitropoliei Banatului*, Timișoara, 1977, p. 40-41 tried to accredit the idea of location of the episcopal "camp" Tibiscum at Timișoara without a serious historical argument..

¹⁹⁷ M. Gyóni, *ESR*, p. 151 concerning the identification of the medieval settlement *Alba Ecclesia* in the boundary of Socol at *Kruglița*, see T. Halasi-Kun, *Hungaro-Turcica. Studies in Honours of Julius Németh*, Budapesta, 1967, p. 295.

¹⁹⁸ M. Gyóni, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

¹⁹⁹ Gy. Moravcsik, *op. cit.*, p. 314; T. Wasilewski, *ZbVI*, VIII/2, 1964, p. 465-485 about the Byzantine theme Sirmium during the 11th-12th centuries.

²⁰⁰ Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantinum and the Magyars*, p. 114 seq.

²⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 114-115.

eval archaeology has not offered yet a conclusive documentation as concerns this. The wall paintings from Ilidia can offer a reference of the existence of some hermits in the lonely valleys of the Banat Mountains.

Historical sources offer a few information about the confessional situation of the Romanian population in the zone of the western Lower Danube, as well as about the functioning of the its ecclesiastic structures during the 13th century. The extension of the Hungarian Kingdom in the Danube zone and the conflict with the Wallachian - Bulgarian Empire of the Asănești had also implied the control over the Episcopal centers in the zone. Caloian had requested in the letter from January 1204 sent to the Pope Inocentius III that the five bishoprics occupied by the Hungarian king have come back under the authority of the Wallachian - Bulgarian State²⁰². The pressures exerted by the papacy in 1232 to bring under obedience of the bishops of Branicevo and Belgrade are extremely suggestive for the political and confessional situation in the Hungarian kingdom at the beginning of the 13th century. The letter on the 21st of March 1232, addressed by the Pope Grigorius to the bishop of Cenad, had requested that the bishops of Albă and of Brandușium of the Bulgarians to come back to the unity of the Roman church, otherwise their bishoprics would be passed under the authority of the bishop of Sirmium²⁰³.

The actions of confessional assimilation and hierarchical subordination as that one already mentioned had undoubtedly marked the episcopate centers from the south of Banat known at Tibiscum and Biserica Albă, in the first half of the 13th century. The orthodox monasteries from the entire Hungarian kingdom had had the same destiny at the beginning of the 13th century²⁰⁴. The tolerant confessional policy of the Hungarian Kingdom had known a radical change at the beginning of the 13th century what had meant the beginning of a radical policy of assimilation and subordination to the Church of Rome.

The actions from the confessional plan had been preceded by the political action of the Arpadian royalty in the Danubian zone that had led to the foundation of the Banat of Severin before 1232. The Romanian society had confronted the expansion of the Arpadian Kingdom in the whole intra-Carpathians space at the beginning of the 13th century. That expansion had combined the military action with the confessional one. The action of the missionary monastic orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, whose presence in the Danubian zone had been already mentioned in the 4th decade of the 13th century, had taken place in the same time with the military actions of conquering²⁰⁵. The Pope Gregorius IX's letters from

²⁰² Hurmuzaki, I, p. 29-30.

²⁰³ DIR, C, veac XIII, p. 256.

²⁰⁴ Gy. Moravcsik, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

²⁰⁵ S. Papacostea, *op. cit.*, p. 56; idem, *AIA*, Iași, 36, 1989, p. 222.

May 1237 have brought the proof of the missionary Dominican monks' activity in the Severin Country (*terra Ceurin*)²⁰⁶. They had had the mission to convert "the crowd of people from the Severin Country" to the learning of the catholic condition. They had been advised to grant absolution for the penalty of anathema either to the clergymen or the laymen who had received learning of the Roman church²⁰⁷.

The effort of organizing a catholic bishopric in the Banat of Severin that would depend directly on the king Bella IV's will is clearly mentioned in the letter from the 7th of June 1238 that he had addressed to the pope²⁰⁸. The king's approach, through which he had requested the power of "bordering the dioceses, of sharing the parishes and of setting bishops there for the first time" had been motivated as being done for the people of "the country named Severin" who had not belonged to any Episcopal diocese²⁰⁹. The very active role of the king Bella IV in imposing the catholic faith had been firmly expressed in his letter from November 1250 addressed to the pontiff sovereign. The armed actions and the matrimonial policy that he had promoted had had the mission to hold out "the shoots of the catholic faith along the Danube to the Constantinople Sea"²¹⁰. The Dominican monasteries from *Ersumlow* (Vršac) certified in 1292 and from *Mezeusumlov* (Șemlacul Mare), which had existed even at the middle of the 12th century, and they had done propaganda on the western border of the mountainous space of Banat²¹¹. They had had the mission to convert the Romanian element from the settlements of the contact zone of the plain with the western hills. In this zone always under confessional pressures and invasions of the knezdoms by foreign nobles, the Romanian social-political institutions had been affected. The case of the district Cuiеști is a suggestive example.

Catholic ecclesiastic structures in the space of the southern Banat had been mentioned in documents towards the end of the 13th century. The archdeaconry of Caraș subordinated to the bishopric of Cenad had been organized in the county Caraș that had occupied a part of the southern plain of Banat, before 1285.

The documents of the 14th century offer essential information for the reconstitution of the ethnic-demographic aspect of the southern Banat and, in the same time, for the knowledge of the reactions of the Romanian society in front of the action of proselytism of the catholic church and of the Franciscan order. S. Papacostea's investigations to know the Roma-

²⁰⁶ DIR, C, veac XI, XII, XIII, I, p. 301-302.

²⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 301.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 313-315.

²⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 314, see the discussion at M. Holban, *op. cit.*, p. 66-67.

²¹⁰ DIR, C, veac XI, XII, XIII, I, p. 346.

²¹¹ Györffy, *op. cit.*, III, p. 493; Knauz, *MES*, I, p. 583.

nians' church life during the 14th century, and, more recently, V. Achim's interest in the same confessional problems, represent essential contributions to the confessional problems of the Banat in the 14th-15th centuries²¹².

The image of the Orthodox Church and of its servants, its dogmas and rites are reflected in Bartolomeu of Alverna's writings with polemic character. He had been the Franciscan dean from Bosnia between 1376/1407. Making evident these sources in the Romanian historiography, S. Papacostea calls the attention upon the confessional policy of assimilation promoted by the Hungarian Angevin kingdom. On the other side, this points out rare aspects met in the medieval sources concerning that time mentality²¹³. In one of these writings, it is firmly asserted the existence of the Orthodox Church and monastic clergy, which had been extremely active. There had been recommended any means to attract them to the catholic faith or to drive them away in case of failure. They had been considerate as "false priests" because they had not been canonically invested. It is remarked the attitude of repudiation of the orthodox clergy from the Byzantine monastic environments that had accompanied the emperor Ioan V the Paleolog in 1365-1366²¹⁴. The Franciscan monk, in an evident political spirit, had invoked the modest social position of the orthodox priests that had removed them from the knowledge of the dogmas and the application²¹⁵ of the ritual of the Catholic Church. The writings of the dean of Bosnia point out the massive effort of confessional assimilation and achievement of "the unity of faith" in the Hungarian kingdom around the church from Rome during the 14th century.

The analysis of the ethnic-demographic structure of the medieval habitat (the 14th-15th centuries) in the mountainous space of Banat had marked out here a Romanian homogenous zone with its own institutions registered within the local autonomy. The structures of the Catholic Church implanted in this space had activated within the Archdeaconries of Sebeş and Caraş of the bishopric of Cenad. The papal acts from 1332-1335 completed by the information from some subsequent chancellery documents point out a few catholic parishes that had activated in deaconries. Only five parishes from the 23 registered in the papal lists from 1333-1334 had been located in the hilly and mountainous zone of Banat.

The Romanian villages of the districts had constituted a Romanian Orthodox block in the southeastern Banat. Accordingly, given its location in the vicinity of the Orthodox states south of the Danube and Wallachia, where hierarchical Orthodox structures had developed, Banat became

²¹² V. Papacostea, *Geneza statului în evul mediu românesc*, Cluj-Napoca, 1988, p. 205-220; V. Achim, *RI*, VII, 1-2, 1996, p. 41-55; idem, *RI*, VII, 5-6, 1996, p. 391-410.

²¹³ S. Papacostea, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

²¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 215-21, note 29.

²¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 215.

starting with mid 14th century a target for the Catholic church and the Franciscan Order. King Louis I aggressive policy in the Balkans had been closely connected to a policy of religious assimilation of the Orthodox people from this Danube area²¹⁶. The Franciscan Order had played the main role in acquiring the "faith unity" promoted by the Hungarian king. After mid 14th century, southern Banat Orthodoxy became a missionary area of the Franciscan Bosnia Vicariate. Towards the end of the 14th century, Franciscan documents were mentioning southern Banat seats (*loca*) as branches of the Bulgarian custody at Severin, Orșova, Sebeș, Srim and Cuiști. The custody of Cuvin had seats at Cuvin, Haram and Armeniș²¹⁷. In following the geographical location of the Franciscan seats, one can observe that the seats of the Bulgarian custody were sited along the Cerna - Timiș artery, while those of the Cuvin custody were located along the artery connecting the Danube Valley with central Banat, avoiding the western hills. Their location in the centre of the mountainous Banat districts is obvious²¹⁸. The founding of the Bulgarian custody and of the Banat seats implicitly is to be directly connected with the 1365 – 1369 actions of King Louis I in Bulgaria. The name of the Bulgaria custody represents also a chronological mark, as V. Achim had recently proved in a study on the Franciscan presence in the Romanian space²¹⁹. The founding of the two custodies in southern Banat had been a direct effect of the anti – Orthodox confessional policy and dispossession of the Banat Romanian landlords promoted by King Louis I. Recent archaeological researches performed in the center of Caransebeș had brought to light the remains of a church and a convent, which can be attributed to the Franciscans. The founding of the Franciscan monastery from Caransebeș during the second half of the 13th century, as Radu Popa hypothesized it is not sufficiently documented²²⁰. Written and archaeological documentation indicates the presence of the Franciscan center in Caransebeș posterior to mid 14th century. An evaluation of the Franciscan proselytism in Banat implies a certain approximation, given the lack of sources quantifying this phenomenon. The impact on the Orthodox rural communities had been reduced, as the confessional configuration of the area remained Romanian and orthodox.

The act issued on July 20, 1366 by Louis I regarding the Slavic or schismatic priests from the Caraș and Cuvin districts had been widely

²¹⁶ S. Papacostea, *op.cit.*, p. 209; V. Achim, *op.cit.*, p. 46; A. Andea, *op.cit.*, p. 81; M. Holban, *op.cit.*, p. 124-126.

²¹⁷ L. Wadingus, *Annales*, IX, 1932, p. 294-296.

²¹⁸ V. Achim, *op.cit.*, p. 399.

²¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 399

²²⁰ R. Popa, *SCIVA*, 40, 4, 1989, p. 367.

debated in the Romanian historiography²²¹. The act asked all the gentry and the cities from Caraș and Cuvin to gather *the Slavic or schismatic priests ... together with their children, wives and all their belongings* and to present them before the noble Benedict Himfy²²². It seems also that during the same year the king had issued an order stipulating that the access to a higher (noble) social status was conditioned by the embracing of the Catholic faith. These extremely severe royal acts were part of the anti – Orthodox and anti – Romanian political program promoted by the king. Silviu Dragomir had clearly defined the coordinates of the anti – Orthodox confessional actions in Banat: the southeastwards oriented Hungarian policy (evidently aiming Wallachia) and the Catholic zeal of King Louis I.. The Hungarian eastern policy, imposed starting with 1365, had considered southern Banat as extremely important, given both its geographical location and the military forces of the Romanian landlords. The old episcopate from Vidin had an important role as an Orthodox center on the lower, western Danube and traditional connections with the Banat Orthodoxy. The fact that the Orthodox priest from Banat were canonically dependent on the Vidin episcopate had doubtlessly influenced the decisions of the Hungarian Catholic king from 1365²²³.

The confessional problem of the Romanian elite from Banat is a constant of the recent Banat historiography²²⁴. The origin of the Romanian Banat nobility is to be searched among the Orthodox landowners and landlords from the Romanian districts. The relation between confession and access to nobility of the Banat gentry is a problem of which solving had been searched in the contemporaneous documents. Louis I had taken severe actions against the nobility and the gentry from the district of Caransebeș. An act from December 5, 1428, re-confirming the privileges of the Franciscan, refers to the king's order stating that: *all over the country and in all Caransebeș county should no one own any land as an inheritance or noble land, or to keep and posses such a land except if it is a true Catholic*²²⁵. Although objections had been raised regarding the existence

²²¹ Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, I, 2, p. 132; I.D. Suci, *Monografia Mitropoliei Banatului*, p. 54, including the older bibliography; L. Makkai, *Histoire de la Transilvanie*, p. 213-214 had noticed that the result of the Catholic proselytism among the Romanians had been modest, as the Romanians had put up confessional resistance.

²²² Hurmuzaki, *op.cit.*, p. 132.

²²³ S. Dragomir, *Studii din istoria mai veche a românilor de pe teritoriul diecezei orădene*, Sibiu, 1927, p. 14-15; N. Iorga, *Condițiile de politică generală în cari s-au întemeiat bisericile românești în veacurile XIV - XV*, *Studii asupra evului mediu românesc*, București, 1984, p. 101-102; M. Holban, *Din cronică relațiilor româno – ungare*, p. 169.

²²⁴ V. Achim, *RI*, VII, 1-2, 1996, p. 41-55; L. Boldea, *Banatica*, 13, 2, 1995, p. 27-44.

²²⁵ I.D. Suci, R. Constantinescu, *Documente privitoare la istoria Mitropoliei Banatului*, I, p. 89.

and authenticity of this royal act, during Louis I's reign the granting of property acts was conditioned by the confessional status (i.e. Catholic faith)²²⁶. Only the consistency in applying the provisions of the act is questionable for the Banat area. The case of the Romanian nobles Nicolae and Mihai Cucavița of Porecha, from the Mehadia district proves that land owning was conditioned by the affiliation to Catholic confession. Documents issued in 1500 point that the two Romanian nobles have been deprived of their properties, on the account of their return to the Orthodox faith (*Mihaillo et Nicolaus, contempta religione fidel cristiane, damnabile secte scismatice Wolachorum sive Rascianorum adesisse dicuntur*)²²⁷. The provisions of an older law of the Hungarian kingdom have been applied in this case (*iuxta antiquam et aprobatam eiusdem regni nostre Hungariae legem et consuetudinem rite et legitime devoluta esse percibentur*)²²⁸.

A detailed reconstitution of the Banat Romanian nobility confession and the evolution of the relations between confession and ownership during the 14th and 15th centuries has to overcome the gaps in the sources and the already existent historiographical clichés. The archaeological documentation points to the building of Romanian churches as early as the first half of the 14th century, some of them being gentry's foundations. The small edifice from Reșița had been founded by the landlords of Țerova. A different evolution has been recorded for the neighboring historic province – the Hațeg county, in respect of the elite's confession and the local Orthodox church from the end of the 13th century until the middle of the 14th century²²⁹. In mid 14th century an Orthodox archpriest was documentary recorded, probably holding certain episcopal functions.

The royal diploma confirming possessions of the Banat gentry in the second half of the 14th century do not mention explicitly the conditioning of ownership and they do not prove either dispossession because of confessional affiliation. This fact has been considered by the recent historiography as proof of a normal situation, in which the Romanian feudals had embraced the Catholic faith in exchange of ownership²³⁰. Part of the Romanian gentry, in order to accede to higher ranks, had accepted confessional compromises, which led them to the adoption of the Catholic religion.

The documents from the second half of the 14th century and the first half of the 15th century, recording the royal diploma acknowledging the

²²⁶ V. Achim, *op.cit.*, p. 45; I.D. Suciu, *op.cit.*, p. 55; M. Holban, *op.cit.*, p. 125 seq.; L. Makkai, *op.cit.*, p. 213.

²²⁷ Pesty, *Szörény*, III, p. 128, 132.

²²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 132

²²⁹ R. Popa, *Țara Hațegului*, p. 248; A.A. Rusu, *Cliton și bisereni din Țara Hațegului până la 1700*, p. 32 seq

²³⁰ V. Achim, *op.cit.*, p. 48-49.

gentry' ownership are also marking the limits of the process of adoption of Catholicism by the southern Banat Romanian elite. The amplitude of this process is still debatable, as records from the 17th and 18th centuries suggest it. It is certain that part of the Banat nobility, owning significant properties, had proved its attachment to the Catholic Church during the 15th century, as proved by the important donations made. Accordingly, Jacob of Măcicaș and his wife Ana have been admitted to the Franciscan Order in 1455²³¹. The same convent from Caransebeș had admitted Ioan of Mătnic and his wife Ana in 1490²³² and the family of the previous *ban* of Severin, Mihail of Mătnic, in 1497²³³. The rich funerary inventories, comprising gold adornments, found in the crypts of the Franciscan church from Caransebeș had certainly belonged to such powerful protectors²³⁴. One Nicolae, son of Bogdan from the Mătnic family is mentioned in 1394 as having ecclesiastical functions in Alba Iulia²³⁵. Recently, V. Achim has asserted a tempting hypothesis regarding the generalized acceptance of the Catholic confession by the Romanian feudal elite from Banat. A concession seems to have been accepted: the Romanian feudals from Banat were Catholics of Greek rite²³⁶. Besides, this formula suggests a short medieval period of the later religious union. This matter could have become an actual interest after 1439, the year of the Florence Council, marking the attempt of unification between the two Churches²³⁷. Furthermore, for a neighboring area with a resembling social and confessional evolution, the end of the fourth decade of the 15th century brought a relaxation in the confrontations between the two Churches²³⁸.

The reconstitution of the circumstances framing the activity of the Orthodox Church in Banat during the 14th – 15th centuries and the reactions of the Romanian society to the pressures of the Catholic Church can only be approximate, given the gaps in the historical sources. For entire areas of the mountainous Banat, such as the Almăj, Bârzava and Caraș districts, where specific Romanian institutions have existed, we lack data on the confessional matter. The spiritual connections of the Romanians from Banat with the ecclesiastical centers already existent in the second half of the

²³¹ Pesty, Szőrény, III, p. 70-71.

²³² *Ibidem*, p. 104-105.

²³³ *Ibidem*, p. 122-123.

²³⁴ P. Bona, *Biserica medievală din Caransebeș*, p. 71-95 and fig. 14-17; from the point of view of the Romanian elite of the Caransebeș district, which had embraced the Catholic confession, this church can be defined as "Romanian".

²³⁵ Pesty, Krassó, III, p. 299-230.

²³⁶ V. Achim, *op.cit.*, p. 50; M. Diaconescu, *MT*, I, 1-2, 1997, p. 57 seq., with a topical analysis of the Banat case.

²³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 50. L. Boldea, *op.cit.*, p. 37; A.A. Rusu, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

²³⁸ A.A. Rusu, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

14th century (e.g. the Orthodox episcopate from Turnu Severin) can be firmly be hypothesized, taking into account the case of the Orthodox monks moving on both sides of the Danube and of the Carpathian Mountains²³⁹.

²³⁹ N. Iorga, *Istoria Românilor*, III, p. 188, 211; S. Dragomir, *Studii din istoria mai veche a românilor de pe teritoriul diecezei arădene*, p. 15; R. Theodorescu, *op. cit.*, p. 207, regarding the Orthodox episcopate from Severin and the presence of a hierarch from Vidin north of the Danube; L. Makkai, *Histoire de la Transylvanie*, p. 214, regarding the role of certain Orthodox centers functioning at the convents from Peri and Prislop.

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- AAH = Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae, Budapesta.
- AH = Acta Historica, Budapesta.
- Acta MN = Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca.
- Acta PA = Acta Praehistorica et Archaeologica, Berlin.
- AJA = American Journal of Archaeology, New York.
- AARMSI = Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice, București.
- AnB = Analele Banatului, Timișoara.
- AIIC = Anuarul Institutului de Istorie, Cluj.
- AIIN = Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională, Cluj.
- AIIA = Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie, Iași.
- AISC = Anuarul Institutului de Studii Clasice, Cluj.
- AMET = Anuarul Muzeului Etnografic al Transilvaniei, Cluj.
- Arch Ért = Archaeologiai Értesítő, Budapesta.
- AO = Archivum Ottomanicum, Budapesta.
- Arch Pol = Archaeologia Polona, Varșovia.
- Arch Olt = Arhivele Olteniei, I (1920) și urm.
- Arh Mold = Arheologia Moldovei, Iași.
- AM = Arheologia Medievală, Reșița.
- AP = Archeološki Pregled, Belgrad.
- BB = Bizantino Bulgarica, Sofia.
- BZ = Byzantinische Zeitschrift, Berlin-Leipzig.
- BDL = Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte.
- CA = Cercetari Arheologice, București.
- CAH = Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae, Budapesta.
- ÉBB = Études Byzantines et post Byzantines, I, București.
- ÉSR = Études Slaves et Roumaines, Budapesta.
- Fol Arch = Folia Archaeologica, București.
- GZM-A = Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Sarajevu. Arheologija, Sarajevo.
- GEM = Glasnik Etnografskog Muzeja, Belgrad.
- GMP = Glasnik prilozi za nauku, umetnost i kulturu; Narodni Muzej Pančevo.
- GGB = Godišnjak grada Beograd, Beograd.

IBI = Internationales Burgen-Institut Bulletin, Munchen.
 Luc StG = Lucrările științifice ale cadrelor didactice, Seria geografie, Timișoara.
 MCA = Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice, București.
 MT = Mediaevalia Transilvanica, Satu Mare.
 MB = Mitropolia Banatului, Timișoara.
 MN = Muzeul Național, București.
 PamArch = Památky Archeologické, Praha.
 Prob G = Probleme de geografie, București.
 Rad VM = Rad Vojvodjanskih Muzeja, Novi Sad.
 RMM-MIA = Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor. Monumente istorice și de artă, București.
 RI = Revista istorică, SN, 1990, București.
 RIR = Revista Istorică Română, București.
 RISBC = Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crișana, Timișoara.
 Rd I = Revista de Istorie, București.
 RT = Revue de Transylvanie, (serie nouă), Cluj-Napoca.
 RÉSÉE = Revue des études sud-est européennes.
 RHC = Revue d'histoire comparée, Budapest, 1947.
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 SlovArh = Slovenská Archeologia, Bratislava.
 StuSl = Studia Slavica, Budapesta.
 StGB = Studii de Geografie a Banatului, I, Timișoara.
 StIB = Studii de Istorie a Banatului, Timișoara.
 StCGGB = Studii și Cercetări de Geologie, Geografie și Biologie, Reșița.
 StS = Studii și Comunicări. Arheologie-Istorie, Sibiu.
 StCIEC = Studii și Comunicări de Istorie-Etnografie, Caransebeș.
 StRI = Studii. Revista de istorie, București.
 StT = Studii teologice, București.
 TRÉT = Történelmi és Régészeti Értesítő, A Délmagyarszág Történelmi és Régészeti, Törsulat Közlönye, Timișoara.
 VF = Vorträge und Forschungen, Sigmaringen.
 ZbNM = Zbornik Narodnaja Muzeja, Belgrad.
 ZbVI = Zbornik Radova Vizantoloskog Instituta, Beograd.
 ZfAM = Zeitschrift für Archäologie de Mittelalters.

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